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From her affectionate
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Watchman What of the night
Watchman What of the night

Isaiah 21-11 Verse

Mark the perfect man
and behold the upright
the end of that man
is peace

Psalms 37-37 Verse

Make haste to help
O Lord, my Salvation
Psalms 38-
22 Vers

OUR LORD'S COMING AGAIN;

HIS APPEARING AND REIGN.

SIX LECTURES

By THOMAS NEATBY.

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"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."—LUKE xii. 37.

LONDON:
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1877.

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PREFACE.

THE following Lectures were delivered in February and March last at Haverstock Hill. They have been revised and considerably enlarged.

The truths of which they treat have long been precious to the writer. The sense of their importance and of their sweetness has grown upon him in the moments snatched from a busy life in which he has prepared what is now before the reader.

He lays this little work at the Master's feet, happy—unspeakably happy—that He deigns to accept it. Should there still be opportunity may He, in His "abundance of grace" be pleased to use it to the instruction of His beloved people in that which is

increasingly important; that they may be found, with loins girt, and lamps burning, "like unto men that wait for their Lord." May He bless to the salvation of the hitherto careless and unsaved the portions addressed to them.

"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Hampstead, May, 1877.

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OUR LORD'S COMING AGAIN;

His Appearing and Reign.

LECTURE I.

THE MORNING STAR.

> "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Revelation xxii. 16, 17.

At the close of this book of judgment—for such the book of Revelation is—there is a word for the heart of the Lord's people—a special word from the lips of the Lord Himself, addressed to those who are already in the closest relationship with Him. At the beginning of the book we find one of the sweetest outbursts of affection addressed to the Lord by the saints, who break in there upon the discourse of the prophet with words which our hearts have often repeated before the Lord with joy and thankfulness: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be

glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." And when the book of judgment is complete, just before the Spirit closes it, the Lord Himself addresses the saints directly, not on a question of judgment, but about that which has reference to their own personal relations with Him. He speaks immediately to their hearts: "I am the root and the offspring of David"—the divine and the human side, if you please, of the blessed Lord Jesus. As God He was the root from which David sprang. As man He was the offspring of David. The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ fills every glory, human and divine; but the word that is especially addressed to our affections and in which He is in immediate relation with ourselves is, "the bright and morning Star."

The night is the time of the Lord's absence. It is the Lord's absence which constitutes this "night," for those who love Him. No wonder that it should be called *night* when He is away; and scripture constantly so calls it. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Rom. xiii. 11.) Salvation here is the complete work—salvation in its perfection. It is God's purpose that not the soul alone, but also the body of every one of His children should express and reflect something of the glory of Christ's Person and the virtue of his work; until this is accomplished, the salvation is not complete. It is not that our souls are not already saved. Assuredly every one who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ *is* saved. He *has* "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Scripture is perfectly clear about this. The moment that a sinner comes to God through Jesus Christ in the

sense of guilt and misery, in the confession of his sins; the moment that a soul is before God in his true place as a guilty, undone, ruined sinner—the grace of God meets that soul according to the perfection of a work which has glorified God, and which has virtually made an end of sin. The soul is saved. It does not wait for salvation, but it is saved. But that work must be extended to the whole being. The body must be presented in the very likeness of Christ, as already, thank God, "the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him." (Col. iii. 10.) "For," continues the apostle, "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand." The night then is the period of the Lord's absence. What brings in the day is the rising of the sun. If the Lord will, we shall see, on a future occasion, the Lord in this character. But before the sun rises, whilst it is still night, the morning star is seen. It is not the morning star, but the rising sun which dispels the night. The morning star shines for those that are awake to see it—for those who have been watching through the night. The morning star does not disturb the sleeping world: the sun does. The morning star leaves the world sleeping, alas! its sleep of death. But the heart that is waiting for Christ, the eye that is looking for Him before the morning breaks upon the world, is cheered by the morning star. "I," says the Lord Jesus, "I am the bright and morning star." Blessed portion for our hearts! Thrice blessed hope presented to our souls! Before the morning breaks upon this world—before the events of the day of the Lord are transacted in it—before one vial of judgment

is poured out—before a single thunder is heard around the throne of God, the morning Star will shine for those who wait for Him. "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

And, beloved friends, notice this particularly: it is the Person of the Lord which is the hope of the church, HIMSELF *coming again*! Never let our souls lose sight of this. In proportion as we value Christ, in that proportion shall we be waiting for Him; and, assuredly, in the proportion in which we *know* Him—I speak of a practical knowledge in the heart and conscience—in that proportion shall we value Him.

The answer of the Spirit and the bride to this presentation of the Lord's Person as the hope of the Christian, is very simple and very sweet: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." The heart is at once attracted by this voice. The eye is lifted up; "Come!" cries the waiting one. But the cry is that of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost. He not only sanctions the cry, but He produces it as dwelling in the believer: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." And it is the privilege of all who hear the voice of Christ to bid Him come. "Let him that heareth say, Come." But what of those who do not form part of the bride, who have not been baptized by one Spirit into this one body? "Let him that is athirst come," say the Spirit and the bride. The believer waiting for Christ can, in the power of the Holy Ghost, turn round to the thirsty soul and say, Come; "and whosoever is willing, let him take the water of life freely." It is ours to-night to cry, "Come!" to the

heavenly Bridegroom: "come and take us to Thyself above, that we may drink at the fountain-head the streams of refreshing and blessing we have tasted below." "Come, thirsty one, and all whom grace has made willing, come and drink with us at the fountain of the water of life."

This connects distinctly and divinely the hope of the Christian with the work of the gospel. The best evangelist is the man who not only loves souls—an essential qualification for an evangelist—but the one who, yearning over souls, is expecting Christ from moment to moment, and would fain press in the thirsty ones, and all that are willing; would "compel them to come in" before the Lord comes. As the angels in Sodom, so the one who really expects Christ, and who in grace seeks souls now: "Escape for thy life! look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." How can he who is looking for Christ, and whose heart is touched by His love, how can he but seek to embrace his friends, his neighbours, the poor thirsty ones, the guilty and the lost around him, and bring them to the knowledge of Christ before He comes? so that they, washed in the precious blood of Christ, which, blessed be His name, cleanses from all sin, may rise to meet Him in the air, and be for ever with the Lord.

This, then, beloved friends, presents the aspect in which we consider, this evening, the coming of the Lord.

Let me direct your attention now to the Lord's speaking to His beloved disciples before He quits them,

comforting them beforehand about His going away. You will find it in John xiv. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The disciples had received the Lord as the Messiah of Israel. They were right. They were taught of God. He was God's chosen anointed One that was to redeem His people [Israel] from their sins; but Israel, alas! would not have Him. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own (Israel) and his own received him not." He is rejected. And now the rejected one, with the cross just before Him, takes a farewell of His beloved disciples. "Let not your heart be troubled." There was everything to trouble them. They were losing the One whom they believed to be the Messiah, whom they believed to be the One sent of God to deliver Israel. And more than this, they had found in Him that which at once met the need of their consciences, and presented an Object for their hearts. Their affections had wound themselves around His Person—won by His own supreme and perfect grace. He was going away from them, and their hearts were troubled. But now He encourages them by this blessed truth, that as they believed in God whom they had never seen, so He was about to be an object of their faith. He was going to be unseen, but not the less occupied about them—not

the less interested in them—not the less an object for their affections. "Ye believe in God: believe also in me."

But, more than this, He was going to the house of His Father. By-and-by, in the power of accomplished redemption He would declare fully to them the Father's name: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father;" but, meanwhile, He characterizes the place to which He is going as His Father's house. There He would be occupied for them. His presence there in the power of accomplished redemption would prepare their place. If the Lord, rejected by Israel, takes a heavenly place, He gives the disciples a heavenly one too. Their hope, as all their relations with Him during His absence, will henceforth be heavenly. Doubtless there will be a kingdom upon earth, He will be King, and they will reign with Him. But their place will never cease to be heavenly, and their only hope now is, His returning Person; for, says He, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Now, I would ask you in all simplicity to consider this, beloved friends. Supposing these words had been addressed to you—that your hearts had been won for Christ, that He had become all your hope, and all your confidence, but you had found that He was going away: had He said to you, "I will come again and receive you unto myself," what construction would you have put upon these words? Would you not expect the Lord to come back Himself for you? Assuredly; and faith rejoices with divine certainty, in these simplest of words, but

words how blessed! "*I* will come again and receive you unto myself." Beloved in the Lord, he would not charge an archangel with this blessed mission. He would not allow to any the joy which He has reserved for Himself, of coming to receive to His presence above, those who by grace believe in His name.

"I will come again." If our hearts are not engaged in it, His heart is; and if we love Him because He first loved us, thank God, we long to be with Him, because He, in grace, has longed to have us with Him. "*I* will come again." Simple word, sure word, upon which the heart stands in triumph and waits for Christ! Circumstances around may be trying; the path may be difficult; the Saviour's absence may be felt—*ought* to be felt; it is night whilst He is away; but He has said in faithful love, "I will come again." He has not said when, but He has bidden us to watch. He has said that it might be "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning." He has left room for a delay; but he has encouraged and bidden the heart of His beloved disciples to wait for Him from the moment He left them. And this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us. He would have our hearts ever waiting for Him to "come again" in the same love which brought Him down to die for us.

And mark what the blessedness is that He sets before us. "That where I am, there ye may be also." Others may picture what heaven will be; others may speak of its pleasures, of its occupations, of its glories, of its joys. Christ speaks out of the fulness of a heart that LOVES, and that counts upon our love for Himself: "That

where I am there ye may be also." Surely that is enough for your hearts. Blessed be God, a goodly number here can answer, "Yes, Lord, that is all I desire; let me be with Thee where Thou art, and my cup of joy is more than full!"

And that is all we know about that blessed place to which the Lord is coming to receive us: it is His Father's house. We shall be children at home and He Himself shall be the centre of our gathering there. God would fix every eye upon His Person—the once suffering One by whom He brings many sons to glory, the One "who loved me and gave himself for me."

When the Lord actually leaves the disciples, the promise is renewed by the angels who speak to them on that occasion. In Acts i. 9 we read, "A cloud received him out of their sight." That cloud was the symbol of God's presence in Israel—a familiar symbol which every one understood. In the account of the transfiguration, it is said, "They feared as they entered into the cloud." They knew that it was Jehovah's presence which overshadowed them. The cloud receives the Saviour out of their sight. "And while they stood gazing stedfastly into heaven, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." When we come to details, this passage will speak to us of the Lord's return actually to the earth, but I read it for the present to shew that it is the same Jesus who has gone up into heaven, who will return thence to

receive His own to Himself. If He is taken up and the cloud receives Him out of their sight, they are to look for this *same* Jesus in *like* manner. It is upon that cloud that we shall join Him, "and so shall be for ever with the Lord"—with *this same Jesus.*

Now, there can be no uncertainty here for the soul that is simple and that bows to the word of God. There can be no mistake: "I will come again," says the Lord before the cross, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also;" and now "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner." How did He go away? Was it not personally? Was it not bodily? He will return then personally and bodily; the Jesus with the marks of the nails in His hands and in His feet, His side pierced in death for us. Just before His ascension He could say to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands. Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Of some it is said, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced," so truly is it "the same Jesus" and so really shall He come "in like manner."

In Luke xxiv. 50, we read, "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." The last impression left upon the eyes of the disciples was the Lord's hands uplifted in blessing—His pierced hands! "He

will so come, in like manner." The first sight that you and I, through grace, shall have of Him will be the same Jesus, His hands uplifted in blessing. They were raised in blessing as He went, they are still raised in blessing—the ever-living One appearing for us in the presence of God, whose hands (unlike those of another mediator) never grow weary, never need to be upheld. He shall return with His hands still raised in blessing. But who shall tell the rapture of our hearts when beneath the shadow of those uplifted hands we gaze upon that face, once marred more than any man's; and when we know from the blessed word of God already dwelling in our hearts, "And they shall go no more out!" It is unclouded blessing! It is His own presence in unhindered communion! It is eternal blessing! "And they shall go no more out."

But let me now shew you from scripture, that we are converted to wait for Christ. Turn, if you please, to 1 Thessalonians i. 9: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, *and to wait for his Son from heaven*, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." This epistle to the Thessalonians was written to perhaps the youngest Christians addressed in the whole of the New Testament. When the apostle wrote it the church at Thessalonica had been quite recently planted. In this epistle to these young Christians the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ occupies a very large place. Every chapter speaks of it, and this first chapter shews that their very conversion was to

wait for Christ from heaven. It is not merely advanced Christians who should be instructed in this truth and in the truths connected with it. The babe in Christ should be waiting for Him to come and receive His people to Himself. The youngest members of the household of faith are taught in this epistle the great truths connected with the Lord's return, and are instructed also about the day of the Lord; indeed the apostle could say, "yourselves know perfectly"—he had taught them whilst yet present with them immediately after their conversion.

Paul had preached Christ at Thessalonica. He had not only preached Him to the Jews in the synagogue, but to the Gentiles, to idolaters. Those who were bowing down to idols heard of the living God, whose creatures they were and to whom they were responsible. They heard of Him with regard to whom they were "alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works." But He was presented as the One who "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This Son of His love had died for the sinner, "had suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God." He had in grace taken the sinner's place and met every claim of God. He had glorified God about the whole question of sin, and borne the sins of every one who believes in Christ. His blood cleanseth from all sin. There was no wrath, no judgment for those who are in Christ Jesus. They believed the gospel thus announced. They received Christ. He was their Deliverer from the wrath to come.

The effect of the reception by faith of these glad tidings of God was that they turned to God from their idols, they began to "serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven." From the moment of their conversion they were looking for Christ from heaven. It was a part of their very calling to *wait* for Him. They were not called to wait for death. Death might come. We shall see, if the Lord will, in other scriptures how death is considered in relation to the Christian. Death *may* come, but the Lord *will* come. It is possible that a Christian who is converted to wait for Christ may be called to pass through death, but what he is to wait for is the Son of God from heaven. He waits for Him, whom through grace he knows already as his Deliverer from the wrath to come.

Let me ask you, my friends, let me ask each one here to-night, Do you know Christ as your deliverer from the wrath to come? Then it is your privilege to wait for this blessed One—to wait now for Him—to be found from moment to moment in the present communion of his love, and waiting for Himself to come to receive you, that that love may be fully known above, fully appreciated, fully entered into, and the praises, the then worthy praises, of redeemed hearts, be poured out before Him.

But do you *not* know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Deliverer from the wrath to come? Ah, then, the morning star has nothing of sweetness, or beauty, or attraction for you. If you do not know Him as your Saviour—if you cannot say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me," no wonder that you should not be

waiting for Christ. For you that day would burn as an oven, and you would be as stubble.

Ah, yes, the WRATH is *to come!* John the Baptist spake of it, and if Christ bare the judgment, the outpoured wrath of God against sin, it is only by faith in His work and His Person that any are delivered from the wrath *still* to come for the impenitent, for the Christless soul. Long after the work of the cross the Spirit of God still speaks of "wrath to come." Oh! for you who are not in Christ it is *to come*, for you who are not washed from your sins in His blood it is *to come*, for you who are not delivered from it by Christ, who bare it for all who receive Him by faith, it is *to come*—the wrath is to come!—the wrath is to come! Flee from it, I beseech you, flee to the outstretched arms of the Deliverer, I entreat you, but flee now! "Taste and see that the Lord is good!" Yes, taste the love that bowed Him down to Calvary; taste, I pray you, the love that made Him the willing victim in the sinner's place, that made Him "suffer for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." That work is done: that work is complete: God is glorified in it. Every claim of God's throne is met, and all the love of His nature, of His heart, is expressed; and the soul that comes to God through Jesus finds a full pardon, a present pardon, an eternal pardon in the grace and in the righteousness of God. Oh, look to Christ now! Look to Him now as the only refuge of your souls, as the Deliverer from the wrath to come; and it shall be yours then to wait for Him as the one who has won your hearts by His all-constraining love —as the one whom you love because He first loved you.

Beloved brethren in Christ, is not the teaching of this simple passage perfectly clear, that from the moment of conversion a Christian waits for the Son of God from heaven ?

"But does not the Son of God from heaven come for each Christian at death ?" Turn with me to chapter iv. of this epistle, and you will find the most abundant and convincing answer to this strange, strange question, a question however often asked, and asked quite sincerely. Verse 14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again"—what the apostle is about to communicate is just as sure, just as certain, and upon exactly the same foundation as the truth of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—"even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him ; for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep, for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

These beloved Christians who had been turned to God from idols to wait for His Son from heaven, had the Lord's coming so vividly before their souls—so constantly present to their minds that they feared, as some of their number were called away by death, that these beloved ones would be absent when the Lord came to

receive His own. They did not believe that they would be lost. It was left for a darker day for any Christian to suppose that one who was "one spirit with the Lord" could ever be lost. But they feared that they would miss the first rapturous meeting of the blessed Lord with His saints who were waiting for Him at His coming according to His own word, "I will *come* and receive you unto myself."

And now, how does the apostle correct this fear which had taken such possession of their breasts? What does he tell them? That they were quite mistaken in expecting the Lord so soon? that there would be a long interval, and even a millennium, before the Lord would come? It would have been exactly the moment to correct this impression, if the impression had been an erroneous one. If these beloved saints were not to be waiting from day to day for Christ, it was just the opportunity to set them right upon so momentous a subject. How, then, does the apostle address them? He confirms them in the expectation of the Lord's coming. He takes his own place with them as one who is so looking for the Lord to come, that he says, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds." Look for a moment at the teaching of this verse, so precious to the heart that longs for Christ's return.

It was a matter of revelation to the apostle, of direct revelation from the Lord: "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent," or go before, "them that sleep." I suppose you all are familiar with the use of the word "prevent"

now obsolete in the sense in which it is used here and in Psalm cxix. 147, and which exactly answers to our modern word precede. "We which are alive and remain shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep."

With such a passage, so clear and unmistakable, how can the thought ever have been entertained that death is for each believer the coming of the Lord? Yet you will scarcely go into a churchyard without finding, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," applied to death. Ah, if people were ready for the Lord's coming, they would assuredly be ready for death! But that death is not the Lord's coming, is clear from a thousand passages in scripture, and remarkably so from this one in particular: "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." To make death the Lord's coming would make this passage say: "We which are alive and remain until we die!" But "we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord," makes it perfectly clear that there will be Christians alive when the Lord comes, and that, for anything we know, we may be those Christians. Indeed our attitude, according to scripture is: the loins girt, ready to march, and the lamps burning, ready to meet the heavenly bridegroom before the morning breaks. There would be no need for lamps burning if we were waiting for the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon the earth. But there is great need for the lamp to be burning when we are expecting the Lord to come for us before the day of glory breaks upon the world. His coming will introduce a day of glory; but the first part of that coming—the

first action in it—is His receiving in the air the beloved church for which He died, which He is cleansing with the washing of water by the word, and which He is about to present to Himself, a glorious church, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." Will the shout wake the world? No, no; the shout will only be heard by those to whom it is addressed. The very word here used is a word which refers to the shout of One in authority, of One in a place of command over those whom He addresses—as for example, a general to his army. We have through grace already learned to know our Shepherd's voice, we shall hear and know the shout of the Captain of our salvation, whilst the world sleeps its sleep of death. "With the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Then the Lord had not come for them at their death—their spirits were called away to be with Him. There are "dead in Christ" when He comes, whom His coming calls out of their tombs, and there are those who are "alive and remain." Death then is absolutely distinct from the Lord's coming. We shall soon see the two put in direct and striking *contrast*.

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' It may be objected, "The apostle was not alive, and did not remain until the coming of the Lord." And what then? Was He wrong in writing, "we which are alive and remain?" To say so would be to undermine

the authority of scripture. He said it by the Holy Ghost. It was God's will that he, and all other Christians, should be found ever in the attitude of waiting for Christ. God knew in His perfect wisdom that the constant expectation of Christ is that by which a heart is kept true to Christ, in a world which cast Him out. There is nothing so sanctifying, nothing that lifts the soul above the scene through which we pass like this "blessed hope," unless indeed it be the sense of grace—the grace that died for us—which may well bind the heart to the person of Christ. It was when the evil servant said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming," that he began to eat and to drink with the drunken. Putting off the hope of the Lord's return, was the first great declension of the church of God. Not so Paul! He takes his place with other Christians—takes that place by the Holy Ghost, as one who was expecting the Lord to come, and was not expecting nor looking for death. Remark well, he never said that he personally *would* be alive when the Lord comes, but he takes the place of *then* waiting for Him.

Later on we find the apostle, in the epistle to the Philippians, "in a strait betwixt two." He was in prison: according to all human appearances he would be put to death by the most cruel tyrant perhaps that ever sat upon a throne. He does not take much account of Cæsar, but he looks entirely to the Lord, and he knows that it will all turn according to the Master's will for his salvation. If he thinks of his own personal joy, he would fain be with Christ. He has the desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. If he thinks of the need of the church, and of the work of

Christ, he sees it is needful for him to abide in the flesh; it would have been gain to die, but it was Christ to live. Later on he knew that he was about to die. So did Peter by the word of the Lord; but this they never used to weaken the hope in the hearts of Christians whose calling it is to wait for God's Son from heaven. On the contrary, the former, in the very passage in which He speaks of His immediate departure, speaks of the crown of righteousness for "all them also who love his appearing," and Peter calls those "scoffers," who say, "where is the promise of his coming?" Both those blessed servants of Christ have changed their place of waiting—thrice happy spirits, they wait *with* Him for His glory and theirs; they wait that "mortality may be swallowed up of life," before the day of glory. Let not Satan rob us, my brethren, of our hope, let him not dim it to our souls; we are right, we have a divine warrant to say, "*We* which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This, beloved, is the perfect joy that is set before us—the Lord Himself coming, with a shout with which we are familiar, to call sleeping ones out of the tomb, and to call those who have not passed through death to be present with the Lord in the power of eternal life as it is in His own risen and glorified Person, that mortality may be "swallowed up of life."

Let us now refer to two further scriptures which connect this coming with the deliverance of the body and the swallowing up of mortality by life, as life is in Christ.

At the end of Philippians iii., we read, verse 20: "For our conversation" (a word which includes the idea of citizenship,) "is in heaven, from whence we look." "We *look*." I ask you to notice this particularly, "From whence we *look*;" not "from whence we *shall* look;" not "from whence the Lord will come," but, "from whence we *look*, for the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who shall change our vile body [body of humiliation], that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body [body of glory], according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." This, at all events, is not death. We are never called to look for it, but for its mighty Conqueror. This lovely passage shews the Christian to be a heavenly man here upon earth; his citizenship is in heaven. This is as much lost sight of as the hope of the church; indeed the two things go together. The calling and the hope are equally heavenly; the believer now is not of the world, even as Christ is not of it. (John xvii. 16.) The Christian belongs to heaven. He is a child of God—a child away from home. He looks, however, for the Lord Jesus Christ, as Saviour, to change his body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory. The first exercise of the power that will subdue all things to Himself—the first exercise of the power of the Lord Jesus at His coming again, will be to change the bodies of humiliation of all His people into the fashion of His body of glory, accomplishing that wise and gracious counsel, deep laid in the heart of our God: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that

he might be the firstborn among *many brethren*." Rom. viii. 29.

In the light of this passage, look at 2 Corinthians v.: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit."

There are three conditions in which a Christian may be found. He may be as we are to-night—I speak of course to believers—delivered from the wrath to come, having the "knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins," and in the favour of God as it rests upon Christ. This is where the revelation of God in Christ puts the believer: "into this favour wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" wondrous place, my brethren, that pure grace alone could give! God be praised that He has given such as we were in our sins, and such as we are now, alas! so faithless and so feeble even in our affections—that He should have given us the very place that Christ has in His presence. "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me." But the body is still unredeemed, although the purchase-price is paid for it, it is still subject to suffering, and liable to death. "Ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit,

[remark, we already possess the Spirit and His first-fruits,] even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Rom. viii. 23.

The second condition in which the Christian may be, is: the body laid in the tomb, but the soul in the presence of Christ above—the spirit happy with Christ, unspeakably happy. It is far better to depart and be with Christ than to be at home in the body and absent from the Lord. The body is a hindrance, and those whose blessed spirits are with Christ have lost the hindrance, and have found the presence of their Lord. Christ said to the thief dying at His side, "To-day shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." Happy first-fruits of redeeming love in accomplished redemption! Precious grace that exchanged for him the cross of shame, and the "due reward of his deeds," for the paradise of God, and the presence there of his new-found Saviour! But God was now glorified, sin put away, the flood-gates of mercy opened, opened wide enough for the blessed Lord to say to a thief at His side, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." A thief—no longer a thief, but washed, sanctified, justified—*with* the Lord in paradise at sunset, is a wonder of grace, but mid-day had seen a mightier wonder still! Deep in that darkness hangs the Lord of glory, "numbered with the transgressors." The thief was with Christ in paradise at sunset, because the Saviour had been *with* and *for* him at mid-day. Could anything then be better than this second condition in which a Christian may be? Oh yes! This is not the full answer to the work of redemption. It is not the full

expression of the glory of Christ, nor the full manifestation of life, as it is in a glorified Jesus.

The third condition in which a Christian may be found, in which one day all will be found, is: body, soul, and spirit, in the image of Christ in His presence above. This is the thing for which the apostle longs: this is the thing for which Christians are called to wait. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed," (the disembodied state), "but clothed upon," that is with the heavenly house, with the glorified body: "that mortality might be swallowed up of life," that every fruit of sin, as regards the Christian, should have disappeared, and that the whole being should be manifested in the likeness and glory of Christ—fruit of His redeeming work, fruit of God's redeeming love.

"Now he that hath wrought us for this self-same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." Yes, it is God who has "wrought" us for this full salvation, for this perfect glory with Christ. We are called, beloved friends, not to wait for the joy of being ourselves with Christ, "absent from the body, present with the Lord," but we are called to wait for Him to come, that mortality may be swallowed up of life—that all the redeemed of God may be gathered up to meet their Saviour in the air—that the full fruit of His work may be reaped by the whole church of God in the Father's house above.

What a glorious answer it will be to the redemption which the Lord Jesus has accomplished, the wondrous work in which He has glorified God upon the cross,

when the redeemed rise from their tombs, clothed upon with their house which is from heaven! Ay, and what a glorious answer to that redeeming work, when we who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall be caught up, changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, this mortal clothed in immortality, and mortality itself swallowed up of life!

Let us look at the full light which the Spirit of God throws upon this part of our subject in 1 Corinthians xv., a chapter with which you are all very familiar. And first, a word on verse 21: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead!" Amazing truth! Man brought in the dishonour of God. Man brought in the greatest glory that has ever been brought to His name! In view of the cross, the Lord Jesus could say (John xiii. 31), "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." The Lord Jesus, as Son of man, comes up to the cross, and, crucified through weakness, vindicates God in His nature and in His government, justifies God even in forsaking Him, answers every claim which His throne had upon the sinner, opens a way for His heart to pour itself out in fullest grace, and, in the very dust of death brings more glory to God than if sin had never polluted the creation of God nor dishonoured His name. He glorifies God supremely in the very place of man's dishonour! But what is God's answer to this work in which He has been so glorified? "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." The blessed One who has gone down into death for the glory of God, is "raised

from the dead by the glory of the Father." "Who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Ah, if we thought of Christ instead of ourselves, if we thought of His glory, our own joy in departing to be with Christ would not occupy us, but we should be longing for the full satisfaction of His heart in receiving the whole redeemed church of God, whether those that lie in their tombs, or those who are called up to be with Christ without passing through death. It is our privilege ever to think of Christ Himself and His glory.

"For," continues the apostle, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" that is, of course, all of whom this passage is speaking: "every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." This passage does not treat of the resurrection of the wicked. There are two resurrections spoken of in the New Testament, widely separated, both in time and character. In *time* they are separated by the whole thousand years of blessing for the earth beneath the sway of Christ; in *character* they are still more widely separated. Of a "general resurrection," there is not a word in scripture, and the idea of such a thing falsifies entirely both "the resurrection of life," and "the resurrection of judgment." Let us look at John v., where these striking and momentous expressions occur. And first let me meet an objection which some may make who have only looked superficially at the chapter and have never read it in the

light of other scriptures. It is said (ver. 28), "The *hour* cometh in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." All are raised then in one hour, an objector may be supposed to urge. Let such a one consider verse 25, which speaks of another "hour." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." This *hour* is the hour of grace, as the other is the *hour* of judgment, just as we often speak of the "day of grace" and the "day of judgment." As the period in which souls—dead morally before God—dead in their trespasses and their sins—are being called by the Son of God into eternal life, lasts neither a literal *day* nor a literal *hour*, but has lasted already more than 1800 years, so the period in which bodies are called out of their graves will be neither a literal *day*, nor a literal *hour*. This use of these terms, "day" and "hour" is perfectly simple, and is quite familiar in human language as well as in divine.

If however this scripture gives us no indication of the difference of time, it separates morally the two resurrections, wide as heaven and hell asunder; the one, the "resurrection of life," the other, the "resurrection of judgment.* The life-resurrection is but the completion

* The same Greek word is translated in this chapter, "judgment," "condemnation" and "damnation." In each case the word is κρίσις, and should be rendered judgment: "shall not come into judgment" (ver. 24); "authority to execute judgment" (ver. 27), and "the resurrection of judgment." (Ver. 29.) Doubtless damnation will be the result, but it is *judgment* which characterizes this resurrection, as *life* the other.

of the life-giving which the Lord Jesus has already commenced. He gives life to the soul in the accomplishment of the blessed will of the Father, and at the appointed time He will extend that work to the body. As to the soul, listen to what He says: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." (Ver. 24.) The believer has already life in Christ, and should he sleep in Jesus, his resurrection will be but the extension of this life in Christ to the body, so that Christ may be *fully* glorified. The resurrection of the wicked will be an exercise of the "authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." *Judgment* characterizes this resurrection —judgment into which the believer shall not come—judgment, the object of which, as presented here, is that the Son should be honoured in those who *would not* honour Him in "hearing his word and believing on him that sent him."

The resurrection of life is called in Luke xiv.: "The resurrection of the just." "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Here we have a further characteristic of this resurrection—it is "the just" only who are raised, and so distinct is it that those who know the grace of God are encouraged to walk in that grace in a hostile world by the recompense to be accorded at this resurrection.

Further light is thrown upon it by Luke xx. 35: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead." What could this passage mean, if all, righteous and wicked, rose

together? The resurrection from the dead is a thing that some are "accounted worthy to obtain." Sure I am it is pure grace, though acting in righteousness, which accounts any "worthy;" all *worthiness* is Christ's. He was *worthy* to obtain the resurrection, and those "that are Christ's at His coming will be "accounted worthy."

Still clearer for our present subject is the light of Philippians iii. 11: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." If all are to die and to share in a general resurrection, then indeed it could be no subject of aspiration, or of longing on the part of any one, for all *must* attain it. But consider a little the beautiful passage, of which this verse forms part. The apostle had seen the Christ in glory, whom in his ignorance and unbelief he had persecuted. Bitterness it becomes to his soul that he could ever have persecuted One who, when He takes him red-handed with the blood of His saints (Himself—"why persecutest thou Me?"), has nothing but grace "exceeding abundant" towards him. But oh! the price that this Saviour has now for his soul, led captive by His grace! "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Ah, yes, Christ has become the holy passion of his soul. Anything for Christ! nothing without Him! In the knowledge of Him, in the power of His resurrection, He craves as the highest privilege to which he can aspire, to suffer as He suffered, to die as He died, that he might be raised as He was raised! Suffering could have had no attraction for him, save that he might be thus assimilated to Christ—no attraction save as it was "the fellowship of *His* suffering." And the at-

traction of resurrection for Paul was, that it was the path that "Christ Jesus my Lord" had trodden. Christ, in His humiliation, addressing His Lord had said, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life," and if Paul be "made conformable to his death," *his* Lord would shew him too that same path of life. Christ's was a resurrection "from among the dead." It is true that because of the dignity of His Person, "it was not possible he should be holden of it." But He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. His resurrection was God's testimony of His entire acceptance of the work of the cross, and His delight in the One that had accomplished it. He was raised alone, leaving the dead behind Him. The favour of God, the righteousness of God, the glory of the Father could not but call out of the tomb the One who had gone down in purest grace to man, in perfect obedience and love to the Father. Paul longed to attain a resurrection which would express the same favour, be by the same righteousness and in the power of the same glory. Christ had suffered, Christ had died, Christ had been raised out from among the dead. "Christ Jesus my Lord" had so captivated his whole soul that he *would be like Him* in the whole path of death and of life. This character of Christ's resurrection and of that to which Paul aspired, we know full well from other scriptures, but it is confirmatory to know that the best readings give this passage the sense I am insisting upon: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection *from among* the dead."

In Revelation xx. we find that after the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated, and therefore after the resurrec-

tion of those who form part of the bride, others are raised, "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection, Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power." The first resurrection includes both the heavenly saints and those of whom this passage speaks and who are raised *after* the marriage of the Lamb. The judgment-resurrection is not called the second resurrection. When we might expect to hear of a second resurrection the Spirit of God pronounces the terrible words, the *second death.* Passing solemn! The second death is the lake of fire!

Thus, then, most distinct in time and character are the two resurrections. That of the wicked is not mentioned in the passage we are considering. (1 Cor. xv.) It is, "Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." Remark, that the various terms in which the resurrection of the sleeping saints is spoken of are applicable to the Lord's resurrection, and applicable in the highest degree. His was surely a "life-resurrection." It was "the resurrection of the just." How supremely "worthy to obtain that resurrection" was the blessed Lord! It was a resurrection "from among the dead." It was the *first* resurrection: "Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." The resurrection spoken of in our chapter is in every way after the model and in the power of Christ's resurrection. This is its great beauty—a beauty entirely lost by the idea of a *general* resurrection.

But turn to the latter part of the chapter, verse 51.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." It is commonly said that there is one thing certain: that we must all die—precisely the thing which is *least* certain! No Christian who is alive when the Lord comes will die, and we who are here to-day may be alive when He comes. It is our calling to "wait" for Him. The word of God says "We shall not all sleep." Nothing can be clearer—nothing more positive; we shall not all die. Death is often called "the debt of nature." Ah! how man seeks to hide from himself what he cannot hide from God, the helplessness of his ruin through his rebellion against God. But to call that the "debt of nature" which is really "the wages of sin" in no wise alters its true character, nor changes in any measure the unalterable word of the living God: "The wages of sin is death." How is it then, seeing that "all have sinned," that all will not die? Because Christ has taken the wages of sin in His own Person. Death, as the judgment of God against sin and the sinner, is beautifully typified by the Red Sea. But the redeemed of God have already passed it in triumph because they are beneath the shelter of the blood of the Lamb—willing victim in their stead—and because God looks upon them as having died in the death of Christ. (See Rom. vi.) "We are buried with him by baptism into death." "Our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "If we be dead with Christ we believe we shall also live with him." Death as the power of Satan is set forth by the Jordan, but here too we are "more than conquerors through Him that loved us,"

for His blessed feet have dried it up for ever (Josh. iii. 15) when the Jordan overflowed its banks—when Satan marshalled all his forces against, and spent all his malice upon, the Lord Jesus. "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) If death (I speak of the body, for the soul is already saved eternally from death and judgment) if death comes upon a Christian at all, it comes to him as a foe that has been conquered and been turned into a friend and minister to take the soul into the presence of Christ. But such is the virtue of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ that there are those who will not pass through death at all. "We shall not all sleep." There is a passage which, misquoted as it constantly is, might seem to clash with this. But our souls may repose in unshaken confidence that no two passages of scripture can clash. We may have to look to God for an understanding heart, but we can surely receive the two, however contradictory they may seem to us, as equally and divinely true. Impossible that aught should clash where all is divine! I refer to the passage where it is said, "It is appointed unto men once to die." It is commonly quoted, "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die." It is not so. Scripture says, "*As* it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment; *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." It depicts in a few vigorous words, on the one hand, the

portion of man as such, sinful, guilty as he is—death and "after this the judgment"; and on the other, the portion of those for whom Christ died, and who by faith have found life, eternal life, through His death:—Christ's coming again for them. No death, no judgment—these passed upon Christ. "To them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

"In a moment," continues the apostle—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." The last trump is clearly a military reference. There were other trumpets to prepare the army for marching: the *last* was the marching trumpet. The last alone is mentioned here, because, I take it, the Christian is looked at as being ready—ready in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus—ready in all the perfection of the blessed obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the sound of the last trump, the marching one, we rise. But who shall tell the joy supreme of that moment! It is *His* face, yes, *His*—at last! The heart that has long thrilled as it has exclaimed, "Who loved me and gave himself for me!" that has often responded with joy, "Whom having not seen we love: in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" what will it prove in that supreme moment when all its longings are more than met, when the eye gazes face to face upon *Him*? Ecstasy will it be? or calm peaceful contemplation? or both? Oh, to prove it, Saviour and Lord!

To *find* each hope of glory gained
Fulfilled each precious word,

And fully all to have attained
The image of our Lord!

"For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The Christian is always looked at as waiting for Christ. "And *we* shall be changed." God give us to take this place! God give us who know Christ as our Saviour and Lord to be ever saying in our souls, "And *we* shall be changed!" The world may smile, but faith reposes in unquestioning certainty on the word of the living God. The children of the prophets did not believe that Elijah had been taken up to heaven without dying. They sent to seek him upon the mountains. Vain search! the folly of unbelief that can never soar beyond the poor contracted horizon of what it *sees* or what its feeble understanding can grasp! When the church is gone they may perchance send to seek some of us on the mountains. My soul! weep in secret places for those who refuse the grace that now seeks the lost and who will be left to seek the church upon the dark mountains of this world, from which the last Christian has risen to meet the Lord in the air! And if the sons of the prophets did not believe it, neither did the people, for even the children, who speak all they think and all they are taught, cried, "Go up, thou bald head; Go up, thou bald head." That is, "We do not believe your master is gone up. We do not believe that God has taken His servant to heaven without passing through death. You, then—you go up too, you bald head!" It was not only mocking: it was the mocking of unbelief that laughed at the idea of God calling up in

"the chariot of Israel with the horsemen thereof" His faithful servant, heart-broken in the scene he now leaves behind him.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." If the body has been the prey of corruption it must put on incorruption; if the body is liable to death—mortal—it must put on immortality. "Who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality (rather incorruptibility) to light by the gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) Nothing will do for God but the full fruits of redemption, that the body should answer to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and be made like to His Person, equally with the soul. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting?" I ask now, in the light of the Lord's coming to receive His people to himself, "O death, where is thy sting?" Where? Where? "O grave, where is thy victory?" Where? "The sting of death is sin." Christ has taken our sins and borne them away from before the face of God. He has been "made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "But thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have seen, beloved brethren, enough to-night to shew that the attitude—the daily attitude of the Christian, is looking for Christ to come to receive him.

On future occasions, if the Lord will, we shall have to look at His coming in other aspects both in regard to

ourselves and others, indeed in reference to "the Jew, the Gentile and the church of God." But in separating for the present, let me add one word to my brethren in Christ. What the Lord Jesus most prizes in this world is the heart that waits for Him. God grant that as He looks down into our hearts He may see them watching for His own return.

But, my hearers, Are you all in Christ? Oh, if you are not all in Christ! It is announced that there will be another address next week, if the Lord will, but the one who addresses you to-night may be in the presence of his Saviour above. Every believer here may have been rapt to that cloud that received, and upon which we shall join, the Lord. Will you be there? Will you gaze in peace upon that face that is "as the sun shineth in his strength?" Could you bear that all-searching light? Have you already peace by the blood of His cross? Is He the refuge of your soul? Are you fit in His fitness for the presence of God? Are you READY to go in with Him to the marriage ere the door is shut? If you are not, let me tell you His blood cleanseth from all sin. His heart is willing to receive you. The very heart of God has joy in the presence of His angels over one sinner that repenteth. Oh, come now! I entreat you to come through Christ to God who gave Him in grace. Come, guilty as you are, ruined as you are, to be washed in the all-cleansing blood of Christ, that when that last trump—the marching trump—sounds, that when that blessed shout of our heavenly Captain shall be heard, you with us may rise to meet the Lord in the air.

I finish, beloved brethren, where I began. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come,'" to the heavenly bridegroom. "And let him that heareth say, 'Come.'" If there is one here that has heard the voice of Christ, but never intelligently said to Him "Come," then to-night "let him that heareth say, 'Come.'" Yes, and "let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"—the water of eternal life which God sends you in the gospel. He writes "FREELY" over the fountain of eternal life. He bids you to drink. Oh, He bids you to drink. You shall have a well-spring in your soul, springing up into everlasting life. It leaves no thirst; it satisfies the heart. And then, as surely as His blood was shed for you, His own hands will receive you in blessing for evermore; "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN.
EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!

LECTURE II.

"A THIEF IN THE NIGHT."

> "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Read 1 Thessalonians verses 1–11.

The way in which the blessed Lord has already been presented to us, beloved friends, is as the Morning Star. As such, He answers to the hopes of those who are waiting through the night for His return; of those whose hearts have been won for His Person "whom having not seen, they love." Before His appearing chases the long dark night of this world's sin and woe, the gentle noiseless rising of the Morning Star calls them to the house of His Father and theirs. His returning Person alone can answer their hopes, but *it* satisfies their every longing. Their relations with Him and His place in their hearts are entirely apart from earthly events, so is His coming to receive them to Himself.

He comes too, we saw, as "the Saviour, who shall change these bodies of humiliation that they may be fashioned like unto his body of glory." We "look"

for Him to be dishonored and to accomplish His work in our bodies. We look for Him from heaven (we all know this), we belong to Him (here, we are heavenly) because He is. He will receive us unto Himself and extend the work of salvation to the body so as to present the whole being in the power of eternal life in the true sphere and home of that life above. We are waiting for the Lord Himself. This hope must not be mixed up with questions of prophecy. It must not be confounded with the day of the Lord, which comes as a thief in the night; this confusion would destroy its real character to our hearts, and would make it impossible for us to be waiting for Christ Himself. There is not one word in scripture to indicate when the Lord will come, but, as we see clearly from scripture how much we are called to be daily expecting Him.

But before He appears in glory there must be a series of events connected with this world, as scripture distinctly foretells. There is however, no event which must take place before the Lord receives us to Himself, according to His own promise: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Now, it is very important, beloved friends, for us to be clear as to the difference between the hope of the Christian, and the manifestation of Christ in glory which introduces the day of the Lord. We shall say, as a person dead I am taken to rest; but the Spirit of God makes it very clear that the day of the Lord cannot come until after the saints have been gathered to meet Him in the air—translated as they pass to be with Him

when He comes to the earth. There is a prophecy, in the book of Zechariah (xiv. 5): "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." In order that these saints may come with Christ when His feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, they must already have been received into His presence. This receiving of the saints to Himself, or rather His coming again to receive them, is that for which we as Christians wait. And this hope is what answers to and calls out the affections of the heart, beloved brethren. If we were called to wait for signs, or for tribulation, for trumpets or for vials, for Armageddon, or the gathering of Israel, a very different state of soul would be the result from that which is produced by waiting for the Person of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

The events which scripture speaks of as taking place before the day of the Lord breaks upon the world, may all take place after the church is removed; and hence the knowledge we have of these events is no hindrance whatever to our waiting for the Lord now. Not only has scripture left room for them all, but in the book of Revelation, it has given us an outline of many of them.

In chapter i. 19, John is bidden to "write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after these." Many of you are aware that the words *μετὰ ταῦτα*, translated by the indefinite expression "hereafter," really mean "after these (things)." The Lord thus gives us a divine division of the book of Revelation. We have first the things John *saw:* "I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of

man;" secondly, "the things which are;" the church in its responsibility upon the earth, a complete history of which in this its outward and responsible character is given us in the addresses to the seven churches in chapters ii. and iii. After this the church or churches upon earth are never mentioned in this book. Individual believers and companies of them are seen, as in chapter vii. and elsewhere, but never the church, whether in its privileges as the body and bride of Christ, or in its responsibility. The third division of the book is, "the things which shall be *after these*." In chapter iv. a door is opened in heaven, and the prophet is called to "Come up hither and I will shew thee the things which shall be *after these* (μετὰ ταῦτα)." He sees there the throne of God set for judgment. But who are these elders who sit in peace amid the thunders and lightnings and voices which proceed from the throne? Who are these twenty-four elders enthroned around the throne of God, clothed in white raiment as priests, and crowned with golden crowns as kings? Who, I ask, are these elders who only quit their thrones to prostrate themselves in worship before "Him that sitteth upon the throne," and who cast their crowns—blood-bought crowns, thank God—before His throne? Who are these elders that (chap. v.) fall down before the Lamb, and celebrate in "a new song" His peerless worthiness? No believer here will doubt that they are those who sang the Saviour's love in chapter i. But they represent the heads of the heavenly priesthood complete and glorified. The church has disappeared from the earth, but it is glorified in heaven. The saints before Christ,

and since—the sleeping ones raised and the living ones changed—have been gathered into the heavenly garner. In the unchallenged title of their Saviour's worthiness they are in peace even when the thunders of judgment are heard. Their thrones are unshaken by these thunders and they are *at home* in the dazzling brightness of a scene filled by the glories of "God and the Lamb." They sit on their thrones, or exercise their priestly functions; they fall before the throne, or cast their crowns there; they point the prophet to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, or they sing the new song in the peace and light and glory of heaven. Thrice happy redeemed of God! how joyous the songs, how peaceful the worship we shall pour out before the throne whilst the world we have left ripens for judgment!

But the Lamb opens a seal (chap. vi.) and the course of events upon earth begins; events which prepare it for the judgment executed upon it by the Lord at His appearing in chapter xix. The Mighty Rider upon the white horse, with the saints in His train, finds the world in its false security. He takes it as a thief in the night and exercises upon it the righteous judgment of which it has long heard with heedless ears.

It is not the time now to go into the details of these events, but the book which I have so rapidly and partially glanced at, taken in connection with other scriptures which have been and may yet be before us, makes the point I am pressing evident—WE, AS CHRISTIANS, HAVE NOTHING TO WAIT FOR BUT CHRIST.

One word more about our own hope, and then we will turn to the day of the Lord. The hope of the Christian

is immediately connected with his present calling. The calling of the Christian is one which puts him entirely outside the world. It is a calling *out of* the world. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The church of God does not belong to this world. When she is considered upon the earth she has a responsibility there, no doubt. In that responsibility she has utterly failed. But as God sees the church in the Lord Jesus Christ, and according to His own blessed counsels which He will yet make good, and make good in glory, she has Christ's place before God.

The believer has life in Christ; Christ is his life. The power of that life will be manifested even in the body. If the saint should pass through death, he shall be manifested in the power of Christ's resurrection; for, as we saw from 1 Corinthians xv., the believer is called out of the tomb on the same ground as was the Lord Jesus. He was "the firstfruits: afterward they who are Christ's at his coming." The Lord Jesus Christ had gone down into the grave in the most perfect obedience, the most perfect self-surrender to the accomplishment of all God's counsels. When the moment was come, God called that blessed One out of the tomb. That was the resurrection of the firstfruits. He could not, as it were, wait any longer. He must call that One who had been rejected by the world, but who, rejected, had given His life a ransom for many—He must call Him out of the tomb. He had gone down to that death from which in His perfection He shrank, that the mercy of God might flow out freely in this world; that God's heart might be satisfied in unfolding itself in

perfect grace to the most miserable of sinners, to the most guilty of those who had rebelled against His authority and trampled His name and His goodness beneath their feet. God raises Christ out of the tomb. He will raise the saints exactly on the same principle, for Christ is their life. By this life and in the power of the Holy Ghost, the believer belongs to Christ. He takes rank with Him before God. He is "in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (1 John v. 20.) This is immensely important as regards our hope, beloved friends. But for us "who are alive and remain" till the Lord comes, this power of life in a risen Christ sets death entirely aside, and we are changed in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye. We go to meet the Lord without passing through death. It is the triumph of the work of Christ; and it is the full manifestation of the power of life, which, blessed be God, we already possess in Christ.

But did the Lord's resurrection disturb the course of the world? Not at all. Some speculated about how it came to pass that Christ was not in the tomb. Money was given to the soldiers to induce them to say that while they slept His disciples had stolen Him away; but the world was in nowise disturbed by the resurrection of the Lord. Nor will it be disturbed by the resurrection of those who are His at His coming. The world goes on its weary course until, alas, the evil which is already so terribly at work has reached its climax—until it is ripe for the judgment of God; but the saints, meanwhile, are enjoying the presence of Christ above.

In the portion we have read the apostle says, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." We are here upon sensibly different ground from that upon which we have been in the preceding verses. Times and seasons have relation to this world, at least they are always earthly. The believer is delivered from "this present evil world," and when the earth is renewed and brought into blessing, his portion will still be above it. In the same chapter (Acts i.), in which the apostles are encouraged by the blessed promise that "this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," the Lord Jesus tells them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." God will in His good time restore the kingdom to Israel and bring the earth into blessing. The *when* is kept in the Father's power and knowledge. Meanwhile the disciples are brought into still higher blessing: "God having provided [foreseen, margin] some better thing for us."

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." What a contrast between the Bridegroom receiving the bride to Himself, and a thief coming in the night! What a contrast between Christ coming as the Saviour to change these bodies of humiliation, that they may be fashioned like unto His body of glory, and His breaking in upon the world's fancied security as a thief in the night! Yet this is the character of the Lord's manifestation to this world.

In order that we may see it in contrast with our

hope, let us turn to 2 Thessalonians ii. "Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."

The word here translated "at hand" constantly signifies "present." Without knowing Greek any one may satisfy himself that the word which is here translated "at hand," and which occurs several times in the New Testament, always has the sense of "present." In Romans viii. 38, the word occurs: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things *present*, nor things to come .... shall be able to separate us from the love of God." In 1 Corinthians iii. 22, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things *present*, or things to come, all are yours." The word translated "present" in these two passages is the word rendered "at hand" in the one we are considering. You will remark that in both, this word is used in direct contrast with that which is future; "things present" in contrast with "*things to come*." In 1 Corinthians vii. we find Paul giving certain advice for the *present* distress. The word "present" is again the same. In Galatians i. 4 we read, "Who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this *present* evil world." The world as it is is *evil;* the "world to come" will be under the direct authority of Christ. (Heb. ii.) The believer is delivered from the "*present* evil world," but will reign with Christ over "the world *to come*." The word "pre-

sent" is yet again the same as the one rendered "at hand." In 2 Timothy iii. 1 it is said, "in the last days perilous times shall come." Here again the word occurs and with the same meaning as in the passages just cited. The "perilous times" are not said to be *at hand* in the last days, but to be then actually *present*. From scripture then, without reference to anything beyond the understanding of the simplest believer, we find that the word in question always means *present*.

These Thessalonians had received the false impression —they were "shaken in mind" and "troubled" by the thought—that the day of the Lord was actually come. And if we consider their circumstances and the influences by which they were surrounded, we shall be less surprised at what we find. They were much persecuted, as we read in 1 Thessalonians. In this second Epistle their "persecutions and tribulations" are often referred to. Doubtless the ever watchful enemy took occasion of these very troubles to rob them of their hope and make them believe that the terrors of the day of the Lord already surrounded them. They had no doubt learned that "the day of the Lord is darkness and not light;" "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness." Their outward circumstances answered sufficiently to such descriptions to present an occasion for the enemy when perhaps their hope was less bright than formerly. It has been remarked that the apostle commends their "faith" and "love," as he had done in 1 Thessalonians, but is silent as to their "hope." Satan, by means of false, judaising teachers, had partially succeeded in turning away their souls from the

hope of the Christian, from the constant expectation of the Person of Christ returning to receive them to be with Himself. Their loss was immense in losing to any extent the "patience of hope," and this loss left them a too easy prey to the false teachers who did not scruple even to use a pretended letter from the apostle, to the effect that the day of the Lord had already come. Thank God that He has overruled for His own praise the mistake of these beloved Christians, and the malicious activity of Satan which gave rise to it. In this epistle we have the most precious instruction as to "the day of the Lord" and its relation to our hope, which we might never have had but for the error into which the Thessalonians had fallen. The apostle writes to correct this error, just as he had written the first epistle to correct another misapprehension. In that epistle he had fully confirmed them in their hope, but had given additional instruction about it to the church of God. Those saints, he had assured them, who had been called away to be with Christ would not miss the first interview with the Lord, would not miss the joy of being there when He received the saints to Himself; He would bring them with Him. Here the enemy had changed his tactics. Anything will serve his ends which dims the true hope to the soul and which turns the heart in any measure from the Person of Christ. He had told them by false teachers, as a matter of revelation and even of apostolic teaching, that their very persecutions and afflictions were so many evidences of the day of the Lord being present. If they believed this, the purpose of the enemy was gained: *they could*

not be waiting for the living Lord who had died for them!

How does the Spirit of God deal with it? In chapter i. He shews that the revelation of the Lord, which introduces His day must be the entire and eternal judgment of their persecutors, whilst their righteous "recompense" will be "rest with us." The tribulation of that day, its "darkness and gloom," are for their persecutors; rest, ministered by "the Lord, the righteous Judge," the portion of those who had suffered for His sake. Thus "he makes the wrath of man to praise him," and Christ Himself in His returning glory is afresh ministered to our souls.

In chapter ii. the apostle shews them that the day of the Lord, for two reasons, could not be present. The first is thus given: "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." In order that the day of the Lord may come, the saints must be with Christ. When the day of the Lord breaks upon the world it is the coming of Christ Himself which introduces it; but the saints must be with Him. He will not come alone to take the reins of government. The saints now are looked upon as sharing the rejection of Christ, and He will associate them with Himself in the day of His power in the exercise of judgment. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Tim. ii. 12.) "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. iv. 13.) "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon

that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Romans viii. 17, 18.

That the saints come *with* Christ when He is manifested in glory we have already seen from Zechariah. A detailed account of it is given in Revelation xix. and scripture abounds with references to this truth and with practical applications of it. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2.) How so? Because the saints are with Christ when He judges the world; they are inseparably associated with Him in the judgment He executes. And no wonder seeing they are, whilst in the world, so identified with Christ that in Acts ix. He calls them "Me," and in 1 Corinthians xii. He says, speaking of the "one body," "so also is Christ." Already one with Christ, *for ever* one with Him! Be it the day of grace or the day of judgment, the members are never separated from the Head. In Psalm ii. 9, it is said, addressing Christ: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." In Revelation ii. 27, Christ says of the faithful who overcomes, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father." In order to wield this power, in order to execute this judgment they must come *with* the Lord. To come with Him when He is "revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," they must first have been gathered up to be with Him.

This gathering of the saints to meet the Lord at His coming had been the subject of instruction in the first epistle. The apostle therefore can now appeal to the knowledge of it they already possessed. He appeals too to their hearts, heretofore filled with this supremely blessed expectation. They had been called "to wait for the Son of God from heaven, Jesus their Deliverer from the wrath to come." The Living One that had died for them was still to be before their souls. Nothing was to be allowed to come in between them and His returning Person. He "beseeches them by" their own proper hope as a known and indisputable truth.

That for which the Thessalonians were waiting and were called to wait, that for which we are looking, is "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him." The day of the Lord cannot be present until the saints have been called up to meet him in the air. Impossible! for when the day of glory breaks upon the world the saints are seen with Him; and before that day even, as we have seen in Revelation iv. v., they are already enjoying the presence of the Lord above, and bowing in peaceful worship before Him. They are already singing the song of redemption before the throne. Ah! who shall tell their joy as they sing: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof!" The book of judgment is not yet opened; the seals are not yet broken; but the saints are prostrate in worship before the throne, at perfect rest in the joy of their Lord. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy

blood." They celebrate redemption: they celebrate the Redeemer in the joy of His presence, in the heaven His blood has prepared for them, before the book is opened, or any of its seals broken. Worthy expression of the grace of our God! worthy answer to the work of Christ! Those who now belong to a rejected Christ will not only be called away before "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth," but will have entered the full joy of their Lord when that terrible hour comes! Pure grace indeed it is! And grace worthy of its source in the heart of God! Not that grace will have done its work when the heavenly saints are gathered home. Far from it, thank God! Enoch —lovely type of the heavenly saints—saw nothing of the flood of judgment. He walked with God awhile upon earth, and noiselessly disappeared from the scene. "He was not, for God took him." *The church will not be, for God will take her.* But God has witnesses upon earth whom He brings *through* the judgment. They pass scathless through it, but they *do* pass through it, and people a restored earth when judgment has purified a corrupted one. Enoch prophesies of judgment (Jude 14), but in virtue of his being called to heaven does not pass through it. He tastes the joy of his heavenly rest whilst Noah and his companions are protected *in* the scene of judgment, apt types of those who safely pass through the terrible day of Jacob's trouble. Enoch's translation was not calculated to disturb the world, nor will "our gathering together unto" Christ. May we be found, my brethren, as he was! "Enoch walked

with God, and he was not, for God took him." His was a dark day; ours is a darker. His blessing was great; ours is greater. We have the full revelation of God in Christ and the Holy Ghost sent down consequent upon Christ's exaltation on high. It is our privilege to walk with God *as we know Him in Christ.* May we be found thus walking whilst waiting for our translation, that is, "our gathering together unto Christ." How soon it may take place! God waits in grace for the salvation of souls: "not willing that any should perish." But the last soul which is to form part of the bride, once called out! ah, then He will come and gather us unto Himself. If the last co-heir should be brought in to-night, ere another sun has risen upon this world we shall have left it for the Father's house. We shall have seen the joy of our Saviour's face as He exclaims, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." To our unutterable joy and blessing the gracious desire of His heart will have been answered: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be *with me* where I am; that they may *behold my glory* which thou hast given me!" Ah! the gladness of that heavenly scene can never be exceeded. But it will be joy and triumph to see His title vindicated and His glory made good upon earth by "the brightness of his coming." When that "brightness" shines forth we shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father."

But there was another consideration which proved that the day of the Lord was not yet come. "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not

come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Then in verse 7 we read, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." In the apostle's day there was a mystery of iniquity or lawlessness at work. This deadly principle was to work on until its full development should be seen in the man of sin—called elsewhere the Antichrist. There was a hindrance to the open manifestation of the evil which was at work. The word "let" has this meaning, as we say "without let or hindrance," using the two words as almost synonymous. There was then, and there still is a restraint—a person who restrains; when this is removed the evil will ripen, and the man of sin will be revealed.

Man's natural condition as a fallen creature is one of *sin*. "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John iii. 4), for so the passage should be rendered. Undoubtedly the transgression of the law is sin, but that this is not necessarily the transgression of a law is shewn by the fact that "*until* the law sin was in the world." Sin is the principle of lawlessness. Before God gave the law man did his own will without the fear of God; when the law had been given, man shewed the lawlessness of his nature by breaking it. When the fullest grace is revealed through

a crucified and glorified Jesus, when the Holy Ghost is sent down consequent upon His exaltation on high, Satan counter-works the Holy Ghost as he had resisted the Father and the Son. (See John v. 17.) Scarcely had the wondrous "mystery" of Christ and the church been made known than Satan brings in his mystery of lawlessness. The deepest counsel of God for the glory of Christ —a counsel hitherto hidden in Himself—is revealed; the arch-enemy works upon man led captive by him at his will, and the lawlessness of fallen human nature covers itself with the profession of Christ. Thank God, Satan cannot reach either the church of God's purpose or the glorified Man of His counsels. Yet alas! how the trail of the serpent is stamped upon that which God set up upon earth as a testimony to the divine mission of Christ and to God's delight in Him!

With the profession of Christ man *does his own will.* "All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ," said Paul, well-nigh heart-broken with the declension that surrounded him in that which bore the name of Christ. "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind *earthly* things." (Phil. iii. 18, 19.) He bids Timothy to "turn away" from some who were "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents . . . . traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; *having a form of godliness*, but denying the power." What a terrible catalogue of sins! What

lawlessness, under the fair and blessed name of Christ! Under it, men commit the same wicked deeds, and shew the same evil passions that those do who are without the knowledge of God, as we read of them in Romans i. This consideration gives its real, its awful character, to the "mystery of lawlessness." Alas, that "that worthy name," the "name which is above every name," should have become a cover for worse than heathen wickedness! Alas, that Satan should so far have succeeded in spoiling outwardly God's fairest work—"the church which he has purchased with the blood of his own [Son]!" "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," spite of divine grace, spite of apostolic teaching, and care, and authority. Sad and sorrowful truth as to that which bore, and which bears, the name of Christ in this world, of that which is, in name and responsibility, the church of God! With what sighs the apostle must have added, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived!" 2 Timothy iii.

The apostasy (falling away) is still the same principle of lawlessness as we have seen working under the form of Christianity, under the profession of Christ. The man of sin, who sums up the apostasy in his own person, is called in this chapter "that wicked" (or *lawless* one). Elsewhere it is said of him, he "shall do according to his own will." (Dan. xi. 36.) "Sin" will culminate in "the man of sin," a man characterized by lawlessness. But here the profession of Christ is abandoned, as we shall see later on. For the present let us only notice in passing that this lawless one will be taken by the Lord at His appearing in his rebellion against God—in his

blasphemous assumption that he is God—and cast direct into the lake of fire.

And mark this well, beloved friends: from the time that the apostle wrote until the judgment of the man of sin by the coming of the Lord, there was to be this chain of evil in the world, now in the professing church, and by-and-by in the apostasy. I refer to this for a moment as a continuous thing, in order to shew a point which is of very considerable importance, and especially so in many minds, as regards the present expectation of Christ. There are many who believe sincerely that the gospel will be preached until the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea—that the preaching of the gospel will introduce that period of blessing which is usually called the millennium. It is quite evident from this one scripture that, between the days of the apostle and the brightness (Epiphany) of Christ's coming, there is no place left for a millennium. The mystery of iniquity was then at work. Instead of things getting better and better, they would get worse and worse, until the manifestation of the man of sin, who would be destroyed by the "brightness of his coming."

There are many other scriptures which tell the same sad tale of that which God set up in purity and grace, but which He committed to the responsibility of man, being thus corrupted; many others which shew that in that which bears the name of Christ, evil is found, till He comes to judge it. This is foretold by the Lord in more than one of the parables we find in Matthew xiii.,

where He instructs His disciples in the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." When the Lord Jesus Christ, who had been "born King of the Jews," is rejected, the kingdom takes a "mysterious," or hidden, form. It *must* be so, for, on the one hand, the King has been rejected and crucified; and, on the other, God will not abandon His purpose of establishing the kingdom. The kingdom does exist—God has acknowledged in resurrection and heavenly glory the title of the King. It is not an outward thing established in glory on the earth, for the King is rejected here. But whilst the Lord's claims are disowned here, whilst He is the rejected One, faith receives Him, and finds every glory and all blessing in His name. Wondrous grace! "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (John the Baptist). The keys of this kingdom (*not* the church) were given to Peter. At Pentecost he called in the Jews, and in Cornelius's house the Gentiles. Soon, alas! unconverted people began to profess the name of Christ. But let us hear from the Lord's lips something of the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

In verse 24 we read, "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence, then, hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants

said unto him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Lower down, the Lord's own interpretation of this parable is given. This fixes with divine certainty the teaching of the parable, and leaves no doubt in any believing mind. We have but to bow to the truth as it comes from the Lord's lips. In verse 36 the disciples say, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

From the time, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ sowed the good seed, until the harvest, there was no interval in which the wheat and the tares were not growing together, in the sphere where the name of Christ is professed

and His authority outwardly owned. That which the Lord Jesus Christ wrought in perfection was committed to the responsibility of man. Alas, for the unfaithfulness of the Lord's servants! "While men slept!" Alas, for the carelessness which left the enemy a clear field for his sad and deadly sowing! Men slept; the devil did not! He took advantage of the unwatchfulness of the servants to bring in evil among the saints of God, into the field where Christ had sown the good seed.

You will remark, "the field is the world," and hence this passage affords no warrant for the allowance of manifest evil in the church of God. That an evil-doer should be allowed in the church is distinctly contrary to scripture. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" stands good as long as the Spirit of God remains in His church. But in the world the wheat and the tares grow together; and the servants are distinctly forbidden to seek to root up the tares. There have been many attempts to do so, and the result of which the Lord warned the servants has taken place. The wheat has been taken up with the tares, and even instead of them. I suppose that for one tare which the professed servants of Christ have plucked out, a great many "ears of corn, rank and good," have been gathered out of the field, that is, put to death. Persecution under the name of Christ has doubtless plucked up some tares, but alas, how many of "the children of the kingdom" have been cast into the fire!

But mark the result in the world, and in the world *where Christ had sowed*, that is, in Christendom. The tares and wheat grow together until the harvest. The harvest

is said to be the end of the age. In this passage there are two words, as almost every one knows, which are translated "world." The one signifies the material world in which we live, and in which the seed is sowed; the other means "age." The same thing is found in Hebrews ix. 26: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the *world*"—κόσμος, the material world—"but once in the end of the world"—αἰών, "age," or rather ages, for it is in the plural—"hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." In the one case it is the material world, in the other "the end of the *ages*"—the end of the dispensations in which man was put to the test in every way. The end of the ages had come. Man was proved to be "only evil continually," for even when God gave His Son in grace, man rejected Him. Israel and the Gentiles were for once cordially united "against the Lord and against his Anointed." Herod and Pilate become friends, and with their men of war set at nought God's "elect One in whom my soul delighteth." The world, led up by Satan its prince to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, there consummates its sin, and brings upon itself the judgment of God. "Now is the judgment of this world," that is, at the moment and in the act of crucifying the Lord of glory. It was morally the end of the ages—not, of course, of the material world, for it has existed eighteen hundred years since.

So, in the passage we are considering, there is the material world, in which the sowing and the growing together go on; and there is the age, or the period in which they continue.

It is not necessary to enter upon the details here given of the gathering "out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." We shall see but too clearly their fearful doom by-and-by. As for the children of the kingdom, that which the Lord's interpretation of the parable tells us with regard to them is touchingly beautiful, but brief, and without any details of how they reach the heavenly kingdom. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." In the kingdom which is coming there will be a heavenly glory and an earthly one. There will be saints above, and saints upon earth. *Here* "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire;" *there* "shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father." Never will they lose their portion in the heavenly part of the kingdom. Assuredly they will "shine forth" toward the earth when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings; but "as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Happy saints! counted worthy to share His rejection for a moment, and His heavenly glory, and the deep, unbroken communion of His love *for ever!*

But where is the space for the millennium? Between the time when the Lord sowed the good seed and the harvest—the end of the age—where is there room left for the millennium? Where? Assuredly the day of earth's deliverance and blessing will come—it hastens apace—"the day that the Lord hath made." But first the wheat must be gathered into the heavenly garner.

No millennium this side "the harvest!" It will be brought in by the Lord taking the reins of government into His own hand.

It is by "the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning," that that day is introduced. The purpose of God in the gospel is to gather out the bride of Christ. When this work is accomplished, when God by the gospel which He is now sending forth has gathered the co-heirs that are to sit with Christ upon His throne, then the Lord will call them up to be with Him. The events that must transpire before the Lord comes in power and glory will have their course. The Lord, accompanied by His saints, will come forth in judgment, and the day will break upon the unsuspecting, yet troubled world, as the thief breaks in in the night.

Consider now briefly the succeeding parable—that of the mustard-seed. "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." That which was little in the beginning was to become a great thing in the earth.

But let us see from scripture what we are to understand by the figures here used. Thank God we need only to compare scripture with scripture in entire subjection of heart, that the Spirit of God may lead us into all truth. Mere human learning or judgment upon scripture is valueless.

The field is clearly the world, not Judaism nor heaven.

It is neither a question of the Jews, on the one hand, nor of the church in its heavenly privileges and calling, on the other. In the former parable a *quantity* of seed was sown in the field. Here it is *one* seed, and that a small one. That which Christ set up was a little thing in the earth, good and pure as He established it. But it was *in the world*, the sphere of man's responsibility. What, then, does the tree mean into which this little thing is unexpectedly, and apparently unnaturally, developed? In Daniel iv. we find the same figure used to represent Nebuchadnezzar in the power and authority given to him. "The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof." The same figure is used in a description of the Assyrian in Ezekiel xxxi. 3–6, and the birds there also find protection under the tree. Can there be any doubt as to the meaning of this striking figure? That which the Lord set up, a small but holy thing—despised and persecuted even—has become a great worldly power; itself an overshadowing protection. But to what does it give shelter? What does it protect? The birds which, in the first parable, had devoured the precious seed! Alas! the force of this figure at least is not far to seek, and that which bears Christ's name becomes "a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." It has lost its true character according to God, and has become a huge worldly system, harbouring in its bosom the spoilers of the work of the Lord.

The parable of the leaven tells a tale not less sad. "Another parable spake he unto them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and

hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."

I am fully aware that it has been thought that the leaven represents the gospel, in its converting power in the world. Are we called, then, to "hide" the gospel that it may convert people? And does the gospel make this progress, or does scripture ever so represent it? Ah, no! the gate has ever been strait, and the way narrow. "Few," alas! "go in thereat." The little flock is little still, and will be little till the Lord takes it to heaven.

But what is the scripture testimony as to leaven? It tells us of "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." It says, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? "Purge out therefore the old leaven." And what then? Is new leaven to be introduced? Listen! "That ye may be a new lump as ye are *unleavened* . . . . let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the *unleavened* bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. v. 6–8.) You will not find one instance in the Bible in which leaven represents that which is good. The hiding is sadly suggestive of the stealthy introduction of that which corrupts. And that it is a *woman* who hides it, prepares us but too well for the seductress, of whose corruption we read in the book which gives, more than any other, the last days of that which bears the name of Christ upon earth—the book of Revelation.

But let us return to the portion, to illustrate which, we have read these passages from our Lord's teaching.

The mystery of lawlessness was already at work in the apostles' days. When its sad working comes to an end, it is because open lawlessness takes its place, not, alas! because things improve. The "mystery" will cease —the lawlessness be openly manifested. The hindrance to the full accomplishment of Satan's aim will be removed, and he will lead professing Christians to abandon Christianity, and cast off the name of Christ. The man of sin will then be revealed, the son of perdition.

What, then, is this hindrance, or rather, who is "he who letteth?" The instrumentality by which he hinders the development of the evil may be various. But there is, I think, no room for doubt, that the one here spoken of as he "that letteth" is the Holy Ghost, now personally present in the church of God whilst in this world. That blessed Spirit will, I doubt not, lead the bride to her Lord, as Abraham's servant presented Rebekah to the man of promise, the risen one, in whom the "seed" was called. That the restraint is not entirely removed at the moment the Holy Ghost quits this scene with the church whom He came down to gather, and to lead to her heavenly Lord, does not disconnect in any measure the departure of the Holy Ghost, as dwelling here below, from the occasion left for the apostasy to take place. It will not be at the moment of the rapture of the church that Satan will be cast out of heaven (Rev. xii.), but who can doubt the connection of the two events? The Holy Ghost, then, is "He who now letteth" [hinders], and who shall "be taken out of the way." Ah, then, how soon will the evil, long and mercifully restrained of God, burst forth with irresistible force! If

lawlessness grows apace now, whilst "the powers that be are ordained of God," with what rapid strides will its full development be reached when authority in the world shall be derived from Satan! If, whilst He restrains in grace and compassion, the fear of God is so abandoned by those who bear the name of Christ—if infidelity is boldly professed under the cover of His name, oh, how speedily that name will be cast off, and trampled under foot, when "the devil is come down, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time!"

How soon will that great enemy of God and of man give "his power, and his seat, and great authority" to the beast—the resuscitated Roman Empire (Rev. xiii. 2); presenting thus a great political power, *not* of God, but of Satan! How soon will the false prophet, or man of sin, raise himself, or rather be raised up of Satan, upon the ruins of national and nominal Christianity, at length entirely apostate, an open and blasphemous opposer of God! This, my brethren, is no imagination. The will of man, mixed up with what God set up in the world for the glory of Christ, will work in "mystery," until God ceases to restrain. Then it will burst out into open apostasy, and find its perfect expression in the lawless one, whom the Lord shall destroy when He comes with "His saints to execute judgment upon all." (Jude 15.)

The Lord deliver His people from doing their own will in *anything*, but above all in that which directly relates to the name of Christ and the things of God! We have *in* us, alas! the sad principle of evil. We are not *in it* before God, His name be praised! He has "condemned sin in the flesh;" "our old man is cruci-

fied with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." But let us ever remember that if we allow our old nature to act in ever so small a degree—*if we allow anything that is not of Christ in us*—it is that lawlessness, the sad history of which we are considering. The Lord deliver us from it!

Let us hear what the Spirit of God says about this sad and terrible child of apostatized Christianity. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." There are three distinct characters in which this man of sin is presented to us here. First, he is the perfection of that which is evil in man—fallen, rebellious man—as such. He does his own will. Man is estranged from God by sin; "alienated, and enemies in the mind, by wicked works," says the apostle Paul to the Colossians. He has rebelled against God—is in revolt against Him. Alas! how little man thinks, in the busy scene he fills with his improvements and schemes of amelioration, that he is in rebellion against a "merciful Creator!" How little he reflects that the sphere of all his activities, and all his hopes, is one vast revolt against the God who still preserves it in His long-suffering! Vain for the man of sin, and for all associated with him—for those who receive "the mark of the beast,"—vain all the ways of God with man!—vain all His dispensations! and vain, alas! the grace that came down in Christ to seek and to save that which was lost! Vain the cross!—vain the blood of sprinkling!—vain the Holy Ghost sent down to

glorify a risen, exalted Saviour! All, all, in vain! The will of man that filled long ago the earth with violence, before God swept it with a deluge—the will of man that made itself "gods many" in the spared world—the will of man that *without* the law forgot God, and that, having the law, violated it—the will of man that crucified the Lord of glory, and that has done despite to the Spirit of grace—the will of man which has corrupted Christianity by the mystery of iniquity—the will of man will find its complete expression in the "lawless" one—the man *characterized* by SIN.

Another character in which we see him is closely connected with the one upon which we have just dwelt. Christendom, after the true saints of God have been called up to meet Christ, will cast off the profession of the name of Christ. The *Anti*-christ will take the place of Christ, whom His professed followers have at length abandoned. It is in this character that he "denieth the Father and the Son." (1 John ii. 22.) But more of this shortly.

The third character he assumes is in connection with another apostasy—the Jewish. Christ forewarned the Jews: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." (John v. 43.) Received not only by apostate "Christians," but also by the Jews, again in their own land, but still in unbelief, this wicked one, this Antichrist, will "sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." This identifies him with the wilful king of Daniel xi., where we shall meet with him, if the Lord will, another evening. Thus this son of

perdition unites in his person the self-will of man in its highest degree, the denial of Christ in His claims and place as the Messiah of Israel, and the casting off of Christ as the revelation of God, and as Head over all things to the church which is His body.

Now read with me, if you please, verses 9 to 12: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

It is upon this mass of evil that the Lord will break in as the thief in the night. The name of Christ has been used for everything that is evil, under the form of Christianity, but, alas! here, when the wheat has been gathered into the heavenly garner—when the church has been called up to meet the Lord in the air—the very forms of Christianity are forsaken—the name of Christ utterly denied. Those who now in the time of lingering grace and long-suffering will not bow to the claims of Christ as He is presented in the gospel, will own the false and wicked claims of Antichrist.

And beloved friends, it is quite possible that there may be people alive now—it is quite possible that there may be some within these walls to-night, that refuse the gospel now, who will bow down before Antichrist. There may be those now alive who think themselves too wise to accredit the "miracles and wonders and signs

which God did by him [Christ]" (Acts ii. 22), who will believe the power, the signs, and lying wonders with which Antichrist will deceive the souls of those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved.

But, oh! the solemn, the awful judgment of those who have heard of Christ—to whom He has been presented as the salvation of God—to whom the present pardon of sins, present peace with God, favour in which the soul may stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, have been offered in vain. Yes, all this, and much more, treasured in the Person of the living Lord who died, has been commended by power, and signs, and true holy wonders that God has wrought by Him; but in vain for those who "receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved." What judgment awaits such! What a future for nominal Christians who are really Christless! How passing solemn that souls who have been earnestly warned that empty forms and lifeless profession are unavailing; who have been besought by the servants of Christ to come and find life and righteousness through His blood-shedding, and in the power of His resurrection; to come and find that God has been so glorified in the cross, that He has exalted Christ at His right hand, "a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins," have yet refused all —despised all! They have not bowed to God, revealed in perfect grace in the person of Christ; they *will* not receive the witness which God has given of His Son nor accept His boundless grace.

But, alas! such will bow before the power, and signs,

and lying wonders of the Antichrist; and as they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved, "God shall send them strong delusion that they may believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Beloved friends, this is more solemn than I can find words to express. It is not the doom of the heathen which we have before us here—it is not that of Jews or Mahometans. No, the Spirit of God speaks not of such, but of those to whom the truth as it is in Jesus, has been presented. He speaks of those who have heard the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, of those who have heard of the perfect revelation of God in the majesty of His nature, and the love of His heart as a Saviour God. All that He is is treasured in Christ for the guiltiest who comes confessing his sins at the footstool of His mercy, but all has been neglected! all refused! The truth—the unsearchable riches of Christ, unbelieved—unreceived! Ah, that the soul sees no attraction there, but has *pleasure* in unrighteousness! The strong delusion is for such, and sent by God!

Do I speak to one who has not yet bowed to God in His gospel—who has not believed the truth? How my heart would fain *effectually* warn you! You are in the midst of gospel light. You are surrounded by christian privileges; you are not a stranger to the name of Christ or His truth in the letter; you have the word of God in your hand; you profess the name of Christ. But you are not washed in His blood, you are yet in your sins!

With all your privilege and all your profession you are still a stranger to the love that gave the only begotten Son "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Nor stranger only—you despise it! Oh, let me by the passage we have just read most affectionately warn you. God lingers in mercy; "not willing that any should perish." But He has written the words I have now read. Yes, they stand the changeless truth of the living God! He will *send* strong delusion! He never sends it—blessed be His name, how long-suffering He is!—until His truth is hopelessly despised—His testimony hopelessly rejected. Judicial darkness came upon the heathen (Rom. i.) "as they *did not like* to retain God in their knowledge, God also gave them over to a reprobate mind," but how long had been His patience! Israel was hardened judicially as we read in Isaiah vi. 9 and elsewhere, but who has not marvelled at His long-suffering before He gave them up? His word stands pledged that strong delusion—irresistible delusion shall come upon professing Christians who "believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." Oh my hearer, if you are not in Christ Jesus by the faith of God's elect—by the faith which the testimony of the gospel produces in the heart (for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God,") there is no safety for you! There is no safety out of Christ! You know not how soon God may call up His church—how soon she may rise to meet her Lord in the air. Sad, awful day for those who are left behind! The day of Antichrist will not linger. He will come in the full energy of Satan. He will present

the very evidence in a lying way, that Christ presented in a true one, to prove His mission divine! Those who have refused the gospel, the children of christian parents, (oh, how can I pronounce the word!) those who have named the name of Christ, will bow down before the claims of Antichrist! Satan whom they have too willingly obeyed will have full power over them, and God will reluctantly—if I may humbly and reverently say it—but surely, abandon them. Oh His lingering love! His patient grace! Would that it might now win your heart and bow your conscience in deep repentance. Yet is it written—listen! God says it! "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion." God never sends strong delusion to a soul unless it has chosen darkness rather than light. Ah no, He has "*no pleasure* in the death of the wicked!" His throne may be vindicated by it, *must* and *will* be vindicated! But He has said it and sworn it: "As I live," saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Blessed God! How well the heart that knows Him believes it! He has "joy over one sinner that repenteth."

But here the day of grace for Christendom will be past. Those who believe a lie will be those who *would* not believe the truth. Believe, I entreat you now, the truth that God presents to you in the gospel. Christ has died according to the scriptures. Blessed be His name, He has "tasted death for every man." He was the Lamb of God, bearing away the sin of the world. God points you to Christ. He testifies in the gospel His entire satisfaction with His work; He has set Him

at His own right hand. Mercy flows freely from the throne where the exalted Saviour sits—mercy for you, my fellow-sinner! God's righteousness has exalted Him there, and His righteousness pardons everyone who by faith comes to God through Christ. God receives every believing soul in virtue of the work of Christ, and sets Him in the light of His own countenance in the full acceptance of the Person of Christ risen from the dead. How safe already—how happy the one who has "believed the truth," and found his pleasure in Christ! For such how sweet the repose in His presence above, while strong delusion is seizing upon careless, Christless professors here below!

Christ in the Father's house above for the believer! For the unbeliever, for him who has pleasure in unrighteousness, Antichrist and "strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned who believe not the truth!" God grant that whilst this now little-heeded warning is realized upon earth, all here may be gazing upon the peerless face of Christ in its satisfied delight as He presents to Himself a glorious church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

> "Thine eye in that bright cloudless day,
> Shall with supreme delight,
> Thy fair and glorious bride survey,
> Unblemished in Thy sight."

It is clear then that unexpected and unwelcome as a thief in the night, the brightness of Christ's coming will burst upon a scene of open revolt against God and His Christ. The most unsparing judgments will fall suddenly upon a world intoxicated with its "progress,"

and its "improvements," and promising itself a bright and glorious future. It will treat Christianity as the swaddling bands of infancy, and pride itself upon the intellectual greatness which has cast off the "superstitions" of Christianity; when lo! the very one appears in power and glory, whom they defy, and whose blasphemous imitator and opposer they worship. "With the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked." The brightness of His coming shall judge the apostate scene. The false prophet who shall have dared to take the place of God shall be cast alive into the lake of fire. (Rev. xix. 20.) Awful end for the representative of apostatized Christianity, and of infidel Judaism!

The suddenness with which this day of judgment will break upon the world is strikingly presented in the portion first read this evening: "For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

When the richest treasure of heaven has been despised —when God's "unspeakable gift" has been rejected— when even the profession of Christ's name has been abandoned—when gross and blasphemous infidelity has taken the place of that profession—no wonder that the solemn warnings of God's word are unheeded, and the judgment long foretold is a surprise when it bursts forth. But to despise a warning—to despise it even to the point of forgetting it, is not to prevent nor change that of which the warning tells. To "walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes," and to *forget* or disbelieve "that for all these things God will

bring thee into judgment," is not to set aside that judgment; is not even to delay it one hour. Even now, with the profession of Christ, people discuss the word of God and pass judgment upon it, with as much assurance as if their thoughts or judgment would alter that word or turn God from His purpose. How much more when men have been deceived by the power and signs, and lying wonders of the man of sin! What wonder then that they should cry, "Peace and safety!" But how speedily will they be undeceived by "signs and wonders;" before which this arch-magician himself cannot stand. When *he* is cast into the lake of fire, and sudden destruction comes upon *them*, ah! then—but all too late—the sad spell will be broken—the terrible TRUTH will force itself upon them—"and they shall not escape." Long have they sought to hide it from themselves, long have they refused to receive the love of the truth that they might be saved; but now the pangs seize them of a judgment executed by Christ Himself. "*Sudden destruction*"—"destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power"—*is upon them* "and they shall not escape."

Heaven is opened. (Rev. xix.) That they have refused to believe in "the wrath of God revealed from heaven," will not keep it closed *one moment* after God's appointed time! The "Faithful and True" appears and "His name is called the WORD OF GOD." Before "His eyes as a flame of fire" the stoutest heart will quake. The "many crowns on his head" will tell a tale of glories won by that redeeming work which has been presented to them as a sure foundation upon which they

were *besought* to build. How they will wring their hands in remorse as they behold His crowns won in a work of grace which they but lately despised! And "the armies which followed"—what a tale do they tell of grace and glory for the redeemed of God, but of bitterness and death to those who "had pleasure in unrighteousness!" The "sharp sword" of His mouth will consume "that wicked," but it will "smite the nations" too. Terrible day of unsparing judgment to break in upon the "peace and safety" of a world sure that a new age of intellectual greatness and mighty progress has dawned upon it, now that it is free from the superstitions of ages! But ah! "*He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God;* AND THEY SHALL NOT ESCAPE." Do be warned you who are yet in the world. I beseech you, be warned now whilst still you may escape! Nor escape only! oh, what is Christ for the heart that knows Him! "*Taste and see* that the Lord is good." Oh that I might win your hearts for Christ! But if His name has no attraction for you, let your need and danger drive you to His feet. For your soul's sake flee—flee for refuge to Him. How can I but plead with you! I believe in the depths of my soul the solemn truth I am bringing before you. And lest *you* should be trodden in the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, I entreat and beseech you: "Be ye reconciled to God!"

"But," continues the apostle (ver. 8), "let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." We saw last week what salvation is in its full sense—the

presentation before God of body, soul and spirit, according to the virtue of the work of Christ, and in the power of His resurrection. We saw that we already have the "knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins;" that, as to the standing of our souls before God, we are already in the full value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we hope for the salvation of God in its completeness above, a salvation we cannot possess till the Saviour has fashioned these bodies like unto His body of glory. "For," continues the Spirit of God, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

The "wrath revealed from heaven" will assuredly come upon those who have been at home in the world, whilst Christ was cast out of it. There is no wrath for those who have shared His rejection. The wrath is for those who belong morally to the night of this world's sin and rejection of Christ. There is none for those who are "of the day," and who come with Christ, "the day-spring from on high." The wrath will indeed be revealed from heaven, but God has not appointed us to it —we belong to Him who pours it out. But, thank God, He has appointed us to obtain salvation. "We look for him as Saviour" (Phil. iii. 20); we are waiting for Him "who died for us." What grace—what favour—what hope of glory we already possess through that death! But He will complete the work in glory, and we shall "receive the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body."

Whether we are alive and remain till He comes, or whether we have fallen asleep, we shall "live together with him." Enough, Lord! enough!

> "There, near Thy heart, upon the throne,
> Thy ransomed bride shall see
> What grace was in the bleeding Lamb,
> Who died to make her free."

Come, Saviour and Lord! come, that we may *now* "live together with thee."

The security in which the world will think itself when the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven, is vividly portrayed in Matthew xxiv. 37–51: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Sad history of the unbelief of man's heart—how it repeats itself! God had said in Noah's day, "Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth." (Gen. vi. 17.) Man did not believe it. It was "contrary to his experience;" it was "contrary to the established laws of nature;" it was "impossible." Sad reasoning, that left *God* out of the reckoning! "I, even I," had spoken! But they heeded it not. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things *not seen as yet*, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world." As little do they heed the faith which proved its simple, unshaken, confidence in the word of the living God, in patiently building the

ark before their unbelieving eyes. What taunts and jeers did the vessel, which there was no water to float, call forth from thoughtless, heedless, lips on the brink of everlasting destruction! But many a day "the long-suffering of God waited." (1 Pet. iii. 20.) So much more evidence for unbelieving man that he had nothing to fear! "They marry"—there's many a happy day before them! "They build and plant, they eat and drink;" they go on their heyday, forgetful of Him who had said, "I, even I, do bring a flood." They "knew not until the flood came, and swept them all away." Ah, it came! spite of their unbelief, spite of their reasonings, their vaunted "experience;" spite of "natural laws!" Yes, it "came, and swept them all away." And when the marriage was interrupted, when the builders found the waters pouring down from above, and surging from the broken-up fountains of the great deep beneath, ah, then the stout heart became wax! I will not, I cannot, picture the awful scene. But let me ask, was the true "intelligence" inside or outside the ark? Well for those whom faith had set with God in the security His wisdom had provided, whilst the last "refuge of lies" outside is swept away—the last "hiding-place overflowed." Compare Isaiah xxviii. 15–18, which speaks of a future day, but one fast approaching, I doubt not.

Yes, it is come at last—"the flood of waters!" And the ark, long a subject of merriment, rides in safety and majesty on the bosom of the mighty waters. But where are all the mockers? Ah, where? Alas, that their sad history, traced as it is by the finger of God, should be

lost upon those who now despise the most faithful warnings, reject the most loving entreaties, and rush on to a doom as certain as that which overtook that corrupt and careless world—to a destruction yet more awful! But "so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The church, like Enoch, will have had the secret of coming judgment, but will have been silently called away to the heavenly rest, before even God in His patience counts the world ripe for judgment. A spared remnant of repentant and godly Jews, and of those who receive their testimony, will, like Noah, be protected of God *in* the scene of judgment, and brought safely through it. Rejecters of God's testimony, despisers of His grace, mockers at His truth, scoffers, who say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" will then, as of old, find themselves defenceless and without refuge in the midst of judgments, long and mercifully delayed, but at length unsparingly executed.

Peter traces the same sad analogy, and confirms all we have seen of the growing iniquity which culminates in the last days, and is judged by "the day of the Lord," coming "as a thief in the night." (2 Pet. iii.) The last days of the present dispensation, which some have strangely supposed would be days of universal blessing, are to witness "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" This is already true in measure whilst God maintains a gracious restraint—whilst "he who now letteth" is still here.

But how open and undisguised the mocking, when all restraint is removed, and the one who "shall do accord-

ing to his will" teaches men to walk "after their own lusts!" Even for the present day of growing evil and ripening infidelity, how apt the weighty words: "For this they are willingly ignorant of!" Yes, *willingly* ignorant. There is no lack of light, no lack of divine instruction, in the word of God. But men are *willingly* ignorant. It is in "his heart" (a word constantly used in scripture for the seat of the affections) "that the fool hath said there is no God." He wishes there were none —the desire begets the thought, and he almost persuades himself there is none. So the infidels and scoffers of the last days are "willingly ignorant." Not only are God's ways of goodness in vain for them; man's ways, as we have seen them at the deluge and as God has mercifully traced them in scripture, "an ensample to those that after should live ungodly;" these are vain too, and vain because they *love* the world, and find pleasure in their own distance from God. They are not willing to receive either His instruction or His warning. But they hasten "willingly," blindfolded, to "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

For this, alas! the day of the Lord will be. It is "the day of judgment." The "day of the Lord" is in contrast with "man's day." (See 1 Cor. iv. 3, marg.) The "day of judgment" is in contrast with the day of God's long-suffering. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecc. viii. 11.) Even that which gives the scoffers opportunity to scoff, is that the Lord is "long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance." Would to God that this supreme and sovereign goodness and lingering grace might lead many now to repentance! Here again this solemn day breaks in "as a thief in the night." It comes when least expected and when men are least prepared for it; when they are lulled to sleep in the world they *love* by its god and prince acting at length in the son of perdition.

But Peter gives "the day of the Lord," which thus breaks in upon the false security of the world, in its whole extent. "Man's day" has had a long and sad but varied history—"The day of the Lord" will be still more eventful. Its first action will be the unsparing judgment of this rebellious world, in order that the kingdom may come and God's "will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." During that day of the Lord, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." After which "the heavens shall pass away." Of this all-important day we shall see more, if the Lord will, on future occasions. For the present we have only to do with its introduction by the appearing of Christ.

We have seen clearly enough, I think, that there is no event spoken of in scripture which *must* happen before "the coming of the Lord and our gathering together to him"—that indeed, we as Christians are called to wait daily for Him. We have seen that before His appearing we must be with Him, that "when Christ who is our life shall appear" we may "appear with him in glory." We have seen the appearing of Christ bring in the day of the Lord. The scene upon which that day breaks as a thief in the night has in some measure passed before us;

lawlessness has reached its height, the utter rejection of Christ and of the Holy Ghost's testimony to His name has culminated in "that wicked" who leads apostate Christendom and Judaism into open revolt against God. Suddenly, resistlessly, the day of the Lord breaks upon the rebellious scene. It is "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Are you sure, each of you who listen to me, that *you* will not form part of that terrible scene? God forbid you should! But if you are out of Christ, you cannot be sure that this will not be your sad and awful doom. If you belong by faith and by the Holy Ghost to Him, assuredly you will *come with Him* to judge the world. But, oh, beloved friends, if you are not His now, if you are not ready to-night to meet the Lord on the cloud, and be for ever with Him, let me address to you a very earnest and affectionate entreaty from the depths of my heart that you will come to the Saviour this very evening. Bow, I pray you, as a guilty sinner to Him who came in grace to seek and to save that which was lost. But bow to Him before you go away! The strong delusion will soon be upon Christendom—the irresistible delusion that will come upon those who will not receive the gospel. Do not say that such strong delusion cannot come! If whilst the church is here, if whilst the Holy Ghost is here, Satan has power to make people, and people of intelligence—in the very blaze of gospel light, believe that man has descended from the beasts that perish, ah! what will be the power of Satan when all restraint is removed! What will be the power of Satan when the Holy Ghost has led the

heavenly bride to her Lord above, and has been "taken out of the way" even in His restraining character! What will be the power of Satan then! And what will be the strong DELUSIONS WHEN GOD SENDS THEM in judgment upon souls that will not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Oh, in what words, with what entreaties, can I *persuade* you to be "reconciled to God? For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God draw your heart now to Christ. Amen.

"BEHOLD, HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS; AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM, AND THEY ALSO WHICH PIERCED HIM; AND ALL KINDREDS OF THE EARTH SHALL WAIL BECAUSE OF HIM. EVEN SO, AMEN."

LECTURE III.

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

> "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi iv. 2, 3.

The Lord was presented to us, on the first occasion we were together, as the Morning Star. He is now before us as the rising Sun—the day-spring from on high. How beautifully apt both these figures are, we have already seen, and this will become more evident as we proceed. Nothing could more appropriately set forth the Lord's return for those who have not "slept as do others," than does the Morning Star. There is no question here of power and glory; no open manifestation. There is no ruling in righteousness nor any exercise of judgment. The sleep of the world goes on till the day breaks. But how welcome for those who have been watching through the long dark night are the cheering rays of the Morning Star!

On the other hand, the Sun is "the greater light that rules the day." When "the sun ariseth they gather themselves together; man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." The face of nature is

changed. When He who "rules the day" appears, the whole world answers to the mighty change; evil is judged; the oppressor is broken to pieces and the captive set free. He who "rules in righteousness" chases all before Him which is unsuited to His sway, and brings in the long sighed-for Sabbath of creation.

On the last occasion we saw the relation between these two characters in which the Lord comes. As the Morning Star He comes before day-break, "for those who look for Him." After they meet Him in the air, there is a pause before He comes forward to the earth. A pause of solemn moment to a sinful and rebellious world in all the forms which that sin and rebellion assume! Welcome and blessed interval for her whom Christ shall present to Himself, "a glorious church!" A joyous one too for those who, not themselves forming part of the bride, are "called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev. xix. 9.) Meanwhile "the harvest of the earth is ripe," the saints who have passed through the tribulation are well nigh worn out by the beast and the false prophet, and by Satan who gives them power. The supreme moment is come, the days have even been shortened for the elect's sake. The Sun of Righteousness rises at length, and the heavenly saints "shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." We have been already taught of God that they come with Christ when He comes to the world in power and glory.

In 2 Thessalonians i., the Spirit of God gives in a few solemn words a most vivid picture of this revelation of the Lord with His saints. The very troubles which came upon the Thessalonians for Christ's sake had been used

by the enemy to make them suppose that the day of the Lord was present. Here the Spirit of God *contrasts* their present sufferings with the state of things which the day of the Lord would bring. That day is indeed a day of terrors, but of terrors for the world! It is a day that "shall burn as an oven," but it is "they that do wickedly," who "shall be as stubble." The tribulations through which the Thessalonians were passing were persecutions for Christ's sake. When the Lord is revealed from heaven He will recompense rest to the saints who have been troubled for His sake.

Let us read from verse 6 to 10: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." When the Lord calls up the saints to meet Him in the air He does not manifest Himself to the world. When He is "revealed," every eye sees Him. The first part or act of His coming has the special purpose of taking out of the scene of judgment those who do not belong to it, but whose calling, on the contrary, it is to "judge the world." In this first act the Lord is not "revealed," nor is this word ever applied to it.

In the passage just read we have clearly then to

do, not with the Lord's descent into the air, but with His coming to the earth; it is His "appearing" or manifestation to it. It is then that the living wicked will be punished. There are two classes mentioned here: First, "those that know not God." "And even as they *did not like* to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." (Rom. i. 28.) The creature of God, into whose nostrils He "breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul;" may, alas, lose the knowledge of God, but he cannot rid himself of his responsibility to Him. Man is responsible for the knowledge of God; as an intelligent creature of God, created in His image, he is responsible to Him; yet he has corrupted his way before God, cast off the knowledge of God, filled the earth with corruption and violence. Deeper guilt and deeper degradation still! unable to do without a God he has made for himself "gods many" before the face, and in the sight of the true God.

But to forget God is not to set aside His righteous judgment. The living God who judgeth righteously has said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Ps. ix. 17.) And here of those "who know not God," He says, "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." How little we judge according to the judgment of God of the sins we see committed around us, yea, of the sins we have committed ourselves! "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." (Eph. v. 6.)

But there is a second class, those who have added to all this guilt in rejecting the gospel when God has come out in grace to seek the sinner; as it is said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Ah yes, the condition of man unfaithful in this responsibility as a creature of God, the sin into which he has sunk, has been met in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That work extends in saving power to every soul that believes. God has been so glorified in it that He now sends the message of pardon and peace to the sinner. Peace *is* made and God announces it. The ground upon which God can righteously pardon the sinner *is* laid and God sends the glad tidings of it broadcast into a world of sinners. Those here spoken of, alas! have rejected this gospel; they have not yielded the obedience of faith to the call of God in it. The gospel calls men to receive pardon and peace through the work of the Lord Jesus.

The righteousness of God it is which, through the work of Christ pardons all who yield the obedience of faith to God's good news. "The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is *unto* all." The blood is on the mercy-seat, and God's righteousness in pardon and in justification is *toward* all: and it is "*upon* all them that believe." Precious truth! the righteousness of God sends the *message* of pardon to the sinner; His righteousness is *unto* all. If the sinner bows to the testimony of God; if he is led by the supreme goodness of God to repentance; if he obeys the call of God and believes His message, the righteousness of God is "upon" him. To receive the gospel by faith is to bow in obedience

before God who sends the *message* of pardon and of peace. To refuse the grace of God, to neglect his great salvation, is to disobey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These too—and with a thousandfold more punishment (see Luke xii. 46, 47), these shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

But what a contrast! These "saints" who had been "turned to God from idols"—to what untold glory and blessedness are they destined! And what, through the grace of God, what had brought them into such blessing? "Because our testimony among you was believed." Bless God for His grace and bless Him for the exceeding simplicity with which it is made known. "Our testimony (the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ) was believed." Simple however as were the means, the change was immense, not only before God, but amongst men. Those who know not God (Gentiles) and those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jews especially, but Gentiles too) united to "trouble" and persecute those believers whose faith *separated them from the world.* "The world hated them because they were not of the world." Satan himself, in his anger and violence against these believers, becomes a telling witness of how "old things have passed away, behold all things are become new, and all things are *of God.*"

But what a change at the revelation of Christ! Tribulation for the world! Rest, judicially recompensed,

for the troubled ones! But more than this—much more than this! The saints are with Christ in His glory. "The presence of the Lord" is their dwelling-place. Yea, the world even sees them with Him. His image shines in the saints, and He is glorified in them! The beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ beams forth and is admired in all them that believe.

Happy saints! Next, beloved brethren, to the joy of being with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, I think the highest privilege that scripture puts before us is surely that Christ one day will be glorified *in* us—that He will be admired *in* us. Think of it, my brethren, so completely has the image of the earthly passed away—so completely is the image of the heavenly gained that *Christ* is seen, *Christ* is admired in us! When those who through grace have believed the testimony of God come in the train of Christ to this earth, having first been taken up to meet Him upon the cloud, the world will see the features of Christ, His blessed image to which at length they are "conformed," in the persons of these redeemed and glorified ones. He, blessed be His name for the grace that has associated us with Himself, He shall be glorified in the saints—He shall be admired in all them that believe. There is not a soul that believes the gospel now—there is not one who now bows to the testimony of God's grace—that will not bear the image of Christ in that day. Not one in whom He will not then be glorified and admired. But Christ is ever the satisfying portion of our souls—our full cup of purest joy. *Now* the just must live by faith. But faith sees Him and presses on to where He is; faith feeds upon

Him and finds strength for the way; faith hears Him say, "I am thy exceeding great reward," and goes on its way rejoicing; faith delights in Himself and in the strength of His grace hails the path of His rejection.

"'Tis the treasure I've found in His love
That has made me a pilgrim below,
And 'tis there when I reach Him above,
As I'm known, all His fulness I'll know."

Then faith will have given place to sight, but the object will be unchanged. To Israel it is said, "Thine eye shall see the King in his beauty." But how near the view we shall have of His beauty before His title of "King" is made good for Israel and for the earth! How satisfied the heart will be to gaze evermore upon that beauty in all its perfection, where neither distance nor feebleness of vision dims the blessed sight! Thus then, the believer's blessing is complete. His every longing has found its answer in the presence of his Saviour.

But here we find him the vessel of Christ's glory before all. It is not the believer that is admired, glorified though he be. It is Christ who is admired in him. All that the saints are, as seen in the train of Christ when He is revealed, radiates His glory. It is in *His* beauty they are arrayed—in *His* glory they shine. The image they wear is *His*—the crowns upon their heads,—*His* blood has bought them, and *His* hand bestowed them. They shine as the sun in that heavenly glory, but only in *His* light, and for *His* praise.

Think of those who are now seen in the various circumstances of this world, whom the world knows in their feebleness, and, alas, too often in their failures—think of

them as thus manifested to the praise of His glory! But oh, the triumph of divine grace that shall manifest them before the world in the glory of Christ!

This, my brethren, is your future and mine. The Lord is coming—He may come at any moment to receive us to Himself. The interval that we spend with Him before He comes to the world will not be at all too long for our hearts; and when He comes forth, the sun shining in its strength, we shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father. Blessed be the grace that sought us far from God, and brought us so nigh to Himself, that His heavenly kingdom is "the kingdom of our Father," and that we shine there in the radiance of Christ's image, to His eternal praise!

If we turn now to 1 John iii. 1, we shall find the Spirit of God presenting this future in a manner divinely attractive to the new man. "Behold, what manner of love!" God give our hearts to-night to be in the state of soul of the beloved disciple here presented, so overpowered with the sense of divine love, as to exclaim, "Behold, what *manner* of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Christ's place in His relationship to the Father! Christ's place in the world which has cast Him out! Well may we too exclaim, "What *manner* of love!" "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." This is our present calling and standing. We are already born of God, and the life we have from Him is Christ. This is not a question either of hope or of attainment. The grace of God has already given us life in Christ, and

Christ's relationship with the Father. "Now are we the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Here we have the truth, already taught us by the portion read from Thessalonians, brought out with great clearness and force.

But there is an additional element of great sweetness and importance. It is our manifestation as children of God. Every believer is *now* a child of God; but does this give him a place of honour in this world? If any of us were a son of the queen, what an important place in this land would such a relationship give us! Indeed wherever we might be in the civilized world we should receive the honours due to her Majesty's son. Thank God we are *His* children. And what dignity, what honour, what place of importance, may we expect in this world as *children of God?* Ah, the more like *the* Son of God we are, the more we shall share His place of rejection here below!

The manifestation of the children of God has not yet taken place. When they are manifested they will receive in the whole universe of God the honour due to those who are in this wondrous relationship. "We *know* that when he shall be manifested, we shall be like him." This is fully revealed to faith; we know it with divine certainty. But *what we shall be* has not yet been manifested; if it had been, who could withhold the place of dignity due to a child of God? Thank God its manifestation hastens apace, for "when he shall be mani-

fested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It is in seeing Christ that we become like Him. It was in looking to Him by faith as sinners that we received the salvation of our souls. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." It will be in looking on Him, "face to face," that we become like Him.

"How shall I meet those eyes?
Mine on Himself I cast,
And own myself the Saviour's prize,
Mercy from first to last."

But as we cast our eyes upon Him—in the very act—we shall be like Him. Oh, satisfying gaze! Who shall tell the joy of seeing Him "as he is!" Transforming gaze! we shall be *like* Him.

Here it is the *manifestation* of Christ which is brought before us. The world has long refused to own His title as Son of God. He is still the rejected One. Faith now owns Him—delights in Him as "My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." At His manifestation *all must* own Him; "that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." But when He is manifested, we are like Him. No wonder that He should be glorified and admired *in* us when we are seen in His likeness. Precious counsel of God, that "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren!" Thrice blessed accomplishment when the saints are so manifested in "the image of his Son" that it is evident they are the "many brethren" of that "firstborn." Sovereign pre-eminence is His! but they

are owned as "brethren;" they are *manifested* "children of God"—the "many sons brought to glory."

What a prospect, my brethren! How sanctifying such a hope!" "Every man that hath this hope in him (Christ) purifieth himself even as he (Christ) is pure." When the church lost her hope, she lost also her character as affianced to a Lord rejected by the world and glorified in heaven. Dark day for her when the caresses of the world—the murderer of her Lord—began to have an attraction for her! Losing her hope, she became unfaithful to her calling. The Lord attach our hearts more to His Person and brighten in our souls the hope we have in Him that we may purify ourselves "as he is pure!"

In Colossians iii. we shall find this manifestation with Christ brought out equally clearly. "If ye then be risen with Christ"—always association with Christ for those who are one with Him by the Holy Ghost—always identification with Christ! Is He dead? The believer died in His death. Scripture teaches this distinctly. It is by faith that we know it. It is by grace that it is so. Is Christ risen? The Christian is risen with Christ. "Seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." The word "affection" is in the margin, "mind." The meaning is, "think of heavenly things: be occupied with heavenly things." "For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." This then is our present calling. We are dead—"our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that

henceforth we should not serve sin. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*" (Rom. vi. 6, 7.) What charge can there be against a dead man? But if we have, according to, and by, the righteous judgment of God lost our corrupt and sinful life, yet, thank God, we live or rather Christ lives in us. We are risen with Christ; we are before God in the power of Christ's resurrection. Every believer, the feeblest, is before God in all the power of the risen life of Christ—I speak of course as to the soul. That power is not yet extended to the body, but it will be ere long. Meanwhile the believer is to have his mind on heavenly things, because Christ is in heaven. Christ is the mighty magnet, if I may use the expression, that draws up the mind where He is. Our portion is ever Himself. Faith looks up even now and sees Him there—beholds His glory, and is "changed into the same image from glory to glory." "But when Christ who is our life shall appear" (that is, "be manifested") "then shall ye also appear (be manifested) with him in glory." Thus we have before us again under another form the solemn truth of Christ's present rejection by the world and His future manifestation when it will be impossible longer to refuse to own His righteous claims. The "princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory." The religious rulers in Israel were the first to "cast him out of the vineyard and slay him," but the Gentiles joined them "to mock him and to put him to death." Since He was put in Joseph's tomb the world has not seen the blessed Lord—God has hidden Him in Himself. There and thus He is our life. Priceless truth for us! Whilst Christ is hidden our life

is hidden. When Christ is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory. For us it is faith now, but deepest and richest blessing; it will be sight then. For the world it is unbelief and heartless rejection of Christ now; it will be judgment then. May we so know Him now as to take with joy the path of His rejection. We shall assuredly "be manifested with him in glory."

In Romans viii. this manifestation of the sons of God is given as that for which the earnest expectation of the creature waits. Verse 18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." In the Epistle of John we have seen the children of God "like" Christ; in Colossians we have seen them "manifested with him in glory." Here we find that the earnest expectation of creation around us waits for this manifestation as the time of its deliverance.

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." In Adam's fall, creation fell. It had been subjected to man. Man, in his responsibility to God was placed at its head. He proved unfaithful, and the system of which he was head, fell with him. But as creation fell into the bondage of corruption by the sin of the first man, it will be brought into the liberty of the glory by the "second

Man" the "last Adam." Under His sway, who is the Son of man of Psalm viii., God will bring the whole creation into the blessing which the death of Christ has procured for it. Now Christ is, as we have just seen, *hidden* in God—for man has rejected Him. As Son of God He is unknown to the world (1 John iii.), which answered His claim to be such by nailing Him to the cross. God has answered that cross by glorifying the "Son of *man*" in Himself,

> "Though earth disowns Thy lowly name,
> God honours it in heaven."

But why are not His claims yet vindicated upon earth? Ah, God be praised! There are *co*-heirs in whom the glory is to be revealed. There are "many brethren" to be manifested in the image of "the first-born." The number of these is not yet complete. When all the heirs are gathered out, God will bring in the first-begotten into the world. Christ's manifestation and "the manifestation of the sons of God" will take place, and creation be brought "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." Creation cannot possibly share the liberty of grace. The gospel may be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven and it leaves creation in the same bondage of corruption. The gospel, if it has alleviated the sufferings of creation at all, has done so by making men better masters to their beasts, but beyond this the preaching of the gospel has done nothing for creation. It is not intended that it should do anything. It has to do with the soul and brings *it* into deepest, divinest, eternal blessing. Oh, "the unsearchable riches of Christ!" But when

the sons of God are manifested with Christ in glory, it will be the signal for the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption.

Yes, it is the manifestation of Christ in glory and that of the sons of God with Him which brings in millennial blessing. The "millennium" is the thousand years of Christ's reign, not only over Israel and over the nations, but over a redeemed creation. The government of God will then be manifested in its perfection in a world which has been the scene of man's revolt against God, of his sin and shame and of creation's subjection to vanity through his sin. Doubtless the bride must first be completed—the heavenly "Eve" who is to share the dominion of "the second Man, the Lord from heaven."

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved in hope," (not "*by* hope" as we are saved by faith, but "*in* hope"), "but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" We *have* the salvation of our souls, we do not *hope* for it. But we have not the salvation of our bodies. "We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Let me ask your closest and most prayerful attention to this very remarkable expression. It is most important we should be clear about it if we would understand the hope our God has given us—if we would learn His blessed ways, and if we would know the

wondrous power of the work of Christ. When the sons of God are manifested in the likeness of Christ they will have received the adoption. They are sons of God already as to their souls. "And *because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." (Gal. iv. 6.) But as to their bodies they are not sons of God. They receive the adoption, the redemption of their bodies, when they gaze upon Christ face to face and become like Him. The Lord Jesus says, speaking of those who have part in the first resurrection, "And they are children of God, being children of the resurrection." The whole work of manifesting the entire renewed man, body, soul, and spirit, as a son of God, is the full "salvation" of which scripture constantly speaks. It is called "redemption" in 1 Corinthians i. 30. Let no one think of either "redemption" or "salvation" as a future thing as regards the relations of our souls with God. This would be a fatal error, dishonouring to the work of Christ, and unbelieving as regards the word of God, "who *hath* saved us"—"In whom we *have* redemption."

There will be no deliverance for the groaning creation that is suffering all around until Christ is manifested in glory as the Son of God, and the saints with Him as sons of God. Then, and not till then, will it be brought to enjoy the liberty which the glory of the children of God will bring in.

In connection with this let me refer to a passage that will come before us, if the Lord will, in a fortnight, from Isaiah xi.; and I quote it now without dwelling upon it to link the two passages together. Verse 5,

"And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." It is evident we have here the deliverance of creation of which we read in Romans viii. If you read the connection, you will find it associated with the personal reign of Christ over restored and converted Israel and Judah. The evidence is complete. The combined teaching of these passages is clearly that the time of blessing for this earth, so often foretold in scripture, so commonly expected by those who receive its testimony, is connected with the return of Israel to their land and the reign of the Son of David. It is introduced by the coming of the Lord and of the saints with Him; by "the manifestation of the sons of God."

If we turn now to Acts i. and iii., we shall see further proof that this "restitution of all things"—for this is the name there given to the earth's blessing under Christ's hand—is dependent upon the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts i. 6, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" These disciples were filled with Jewish hopes and expectations. In the main these expectations were just, and founded upon the word of God. But "some better thing" was reserved for them before the establishment of the kingdom in Israel. God was about to gather out the bride of the Lamb; and these very eleven were to form part of that

bride. We shall see in a few moments that these disciples—the twelve, including the one that was elected a little later in the chapter—that the twelve apostles are to "sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." They have also their places in the church of God. In the New Jerusalem, which is the church in glory, the twelve foundations bear their names. These twelve apostles thus form the link between the two glories of heaven and of earth. Of course the Person of Christ is the great link, for He is the centre of all glory, heavenly and earthly—the object of all the counsels of God both for His own presence above and for blessing upon the earth beneath.

Now the Lord does not tell these disciples that they were mistaken in expecting the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. There are Christians, now-a-days, who from faulty teaching, and from not having referred to the word of God, do not believe that Israel will be again established in blessing. It is really very difficult to understand how any Christian can doubt it with the scriptures in his hands. I have no hesitation in saying, that no one can understand the ways of God with either Israel or the church who does not receive the clear testimony of scripture as to the future restoration, conversion, and blessing of Israel. Alas for us even, if the gifts and calling of God were *with* repentance! Here the disciples put the question pointedly to the Lord, whether He would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. What an opportunity for the Lord to have said, "You are mistaken. There is not going to be any restoration of the kingdom to Israel. God has done

with the earth; He will henceforth do heavenly things and not introduce an earthly kingdom at all." Some such answer would have been the most natural thing possible, if that had been the truth. Indeed it would have been the only thing we could expect from the lips of the Lord. But how does He answer them? "He said unto them, It is not for you to know the *times* or the *seasons* which the Father hath put in His own power." It is not for man to know these times and seasons. The Lord would have His disciples waiting from moment to moment for His return. If God in His sovereignty had been pleased to fix a time for the day of glory, it would have been, of course, impossible for the saints to wait from day to day. But our God would have us detached from the world by a heavenly expectation, sitting loose to things from which we may be called at any moment. There is nothing that separates the heart from the scene through which we pass, like the hope of the Lord's coming at once to receive us to Himself. What value can present things have for one who is expecting the Lord Jesus to come and call him into all His glory above, and is expecting Him from day to day? The Lord's answer leaves their expectation of a "kingdom restored to Israel" untouched, whilst it forbids curiosity as to time. He however turns their thoughts to their own immediate mission when the Holy Ghost should have been poured out upon them.

But let us look at Acts iii. 19. The apostle Peter is addressing Israel at Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified but a short time before. He is

appealing to the nation of Israel to repent that the Lord may return. But hear the words that he addresses to them, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come" (for so it should be rendered) "from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." God would send Christ back again if Israel would repent.

A little later we find Stephen looking up into heaven where he sees Christ standing at the right hand of God, as if He had not definitely taken his seat there. This presentation of Christ to the people of Israel after their rejection of Him is full of precious grace. Christ was still ready to return if they would but repent and receive Him. The nation alas! continues to reject Him, and sends a message after Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Still He is presented in lingering grace. His return would bring the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, for Israel and for the world. "And he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until"—until when?

There is a vague idea in many Christians' minds that Christ will come at the end of the world, and therefore, after the millennium; that He will then set up the great white throne, and all sorts of people, good and bad, believers and unbelievers, will appear before Him on that

throne: for the whole of which there is not one word in scripture. Indeed the truth of God, in many of its most important parts, is seriously compromised by such thoughts. We have seen already that there is no such thing in scripture as a *general* resurrection. We found in John v. the simplest and most emphatic declaration that the believer "shall not come into judgment." Christ has stood in the believer's stead before the righteous judgment of God. He has borne *all* that judgment. He has borne *all* the sins which would have called that judgment upon the believer. The idea of a general judgment at the end of all things, in which the righteous and the wicked shall be arraigned before the great white throne, was never drawn from scripture. It is fundamentally opposed to the word of God and is sadly dishonouring to the work of Christ.* Moreover, that which the Spirit of God here says expressly contradicts the thought that the Lord's coming is at the end of time. "Whom the heaven must receive until the times"

* Lest it should be thought that Matthew xxv. 31–46 is inconsistent with what is here advanced, I would remark that the passage does not describe the judgment of the great white throne, nor refer to it. It is the Lord seated on the throne of His glory when He has come to take possession of His kingdom upon earth, separating the living nations according to their reception or rejection of those whom He calls His "brethren." These brethren are doubtless those Jews who will have borne a testimony for the Lord in the days of Antichrist and the beast. The Gentiles are judged according to their treatment of the testimony of God. It is not the judgment of the secrets of men's hearts; no books are opened. Nor is it the judgment of the dead, for there is no resurrection. The eternal destiny of those who thus stand before the Lord upon

not of the *destruction* of all things, but "of *restitution* of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets."

God has not yet done with this earth. No doubt it now lies under the curse which the sin of the first man brought upon it. But, thank God, there is a *second* Man! No doubt it has been the scene of the rejection and crucifixion of that Lord from heaven. But, in that death He was bearing away the sin of the world. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (Col. i. 20.) The "restitution of all things" is thus one of the fruits of the death of Christ. He will be exalted in the very scene of His humiliation and rejection. God's will must be done upon earth as in heaven. Undoubtedly in God's good time "the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." (2 Pet. iii. 10.) But this is not referred to in the passage we are considering, nor has it been spoken of by all the holy prophets. They have scarcely referred to it. On the contrary, the restitution of all things—the times of Messiah and of blessing beneath His sway—is the

the throne of His glory is certainly fixed and final. Those who have bowed to His claims in the persons of His "brethren" inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world—they go "into life eternal." The rejecters of Christ, as always, "go away into everlasting (same word as "eternal") punishment." This, it is quite clear, does not touch in the least the blessed truth that those who now hear the word of Christ and "believe on him that sent him, shall not come into judgment."

great subject of prophecy from the first prophet of Israel to the last.

These times of restitution of all things then, are to be brought in by the Lord's coming. This we have already seen in considering Romans viii. There the Spirit of God laid stress upon "the manifestation of the sons of God" at the introduction of this time of blessing. That manifestation will be, we learned from Colossians iii., when Christ, no longer "hid in God," shall be manifested. Here in Acts the "heavens must receive" Him until this very same time. Christ's manifestation, that of the sons of God, and the time until which the heaven receives Christ, are all at the same period—the "restitution of all things."

What then could be clearer than that the rising of the Sun of righteousness will deliver creation? What more evident than that the coming of Christ with His saints will bring in the millennium?

In Matthew xix. 28 this restitution of all things it called "the regeneration." It was remarked a few moments ago that the twelve apostles are a kind of link between the earthly and the heavenly glories of the kingdom, for when the earth is blessed beneath the sway of Messiah, what we here read will have effect. But already the twelve apostles have found their place in the church of God, which will always be heavenly. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Here then we are taught that

in the regeneration, when all things are restored and restored upon the ground of redemption, Christ will reign over, and the apostles will judge, the twelve tribes of Israel. Surely no one who receives scripture as the word of the living God (and alas! for those who do not—it will be fulfilled in their eternal punishment)—no one can doubt that there will be a reign of Christ upon earth in peace and blessing, and that it is brought in by the Lord's coming as the Sun of righteousness, with the saints shining in His light, and following in His train!

It is of great importance that we should be clear about the place these disciples take in the ways of God. Whilst the Lord was still with them, and therefore before Pentecost, they were taught by Him as the remnant in Israel. At Pentecost they were baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ. This was for them an immense change. Thenceforward their calling and their hopes were heavenly, because it is a heavenly Christ with whom the church is united; it is a heavenly Christ whom the church expects, and in their place in the church of God, these disciples wait for the Lord Jesus Christ as the Morning Star—as the heavenly bridegroom—"the Saviour of the body." But much of the Lord's teaching to them will not be intelligible if we do not bear in mind that they were then the godly remnant in Israel. God has always kept for Himself a "remnant" in the midst of that "stiffnecked and uncircumcised" nation. (See Isa. i. 9; x. 21, 22.) The Lord appeared at His first coming in one of Israel's darkest days. Long had the lamp of prophecy—itself a provision for an evil day—long had it seemed extinct.

No outward signs told that God had a people upon earth. But even then there were a Simeon and an Anna, there were those that "looked for redemption in Jerusalem." The godly remnant of that day were gathered around the Lord. Let us turn to Luke xxi., and we shall see how He addresses them as this remnant.

And mark, the remnant will be still found when the Lord comes. It will not be formed of the same persons, but it will be essentially the same remnant. We find the same continuance of a corporate position in other bodies. The church of God, for instance, when Saul made havoc of it, was the same church as when he bade the elders at Ephesus to feed it. But what a change as to those who composed it! The *then* "blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious" is *now* exhorting with tears of earnestness and love those who themselves have been added to it by his ministry! The church remains the same, "the body of Christ;" the "members" vary. So there was a remnant in Israel when the Lord was here. It will be found when He appears in glory. For those to whom He spake in Luke, and the remnant He will find when He returns are considered as the same body. I am not claiming for this godly remnant the same character of unity as is found in the church. God forbid! But the more we read the discourses of Christ to His disciples, the more convinced we shall be that the remnant He finds at His return is looked upon as the remnant He left, that is, a body with the same calling and hopes. In this chapter then, Luke xxi., in the latter part of verse 24 we read, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In the discourse of the Lord as it is given in Matthew, there is not the same distinction between what happened to Jerusalem in the day that is passed, and what will happen in the day that is to come. We may thank God that for our instruction the Lord has distinguished here between what relates to the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Titus, and what relates to the day of His own appearing. The Lord finishes what has to do with Jerusalem of that day, by saying that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." These times of the Gentiles and their termination by the Lord's appearing, will form, God willing, the subject of the next lecture.

The Lord then goes on to speak of His coming in glory: "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Well may we bless God that when all this happens, we shall be enjoying the heavenly, holy festivities of the marriage of the Lamb! "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Yes, and we may well bless Him too that when He thus comes we shall come *with* Him! This we have already abundantly seen in the word of our God. "Our gathering together unto him" and our manifestation "with him in glory" have been presented so clearly in His word that we have only had, I am sure, to bow our heads and worship.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then

look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." But who are these that are to lift up their heads because their redemption draweth nigh? If the church has been already gathered up to her Lord—if the heavenly saints are coming in Christ's train, who are these *in* the scene of judgment who are called to lift up their heads? They are some of the saints gathered in after the church has been taken up. They are the Jewish remnant—a people with the same calling and hopes as those who were gathered around Christ and to whom He addressed these words. He speaks of them as the same body, just as He speaks of the "generation" of sign-seekers and Christ-rejecters as that which is found when He comes. The church is far from being the last body of believers gathered out of this Christ-rejecting world.

In Revelation iv., v. we have the church and other heavenly saints glorified: in chapter vii. we have a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews that are sealed; and "a great multitude that no man could number out of all nations" who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Man may seek to limit the grace of God to its present action in the church, but God will not have His grace limited by man's thoughts. He will be *God* in His grace! When the church has been taken up, God will begin to act in Israel for blessing, and by Israel upon the heathen. There will be a remnant—represented when the Lord was here by the twelve, and the others who then believed in His name—who are bidden to "look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." It is

to this remnant that "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." Just before He thus comes, however, they will be in the greatest trouble. This you will see in a moment from the Psalms I propose to bring before you. Some may be ready to ask for proofs that Israel will be again in their land. I am aware I have not yet given these proofs, which are very abundant in scripture. They must be deferred to another evening. But if you follow the scriptures quoted you will be convinced of the truth that there is a godly remnant and an unbelieving nation in the land of Israel when the Lord comes, that is, at the appearing or revelation of Christ with His saints. Indeed His appearing will be the entire deliverance of this remnant, who, when they see certain signs are to lift up their heads for their "redemption draweth nigh."

One word upon the question of "signs" of the Lord's coming. There are no signs of the Lord's coming to receive the churdh in the air: *there need be none.* What! signs for the church whom the Lord "nourisheth and cherisheth" that He is coming to receive it to Himself! Do we want a sign, my brethren? If a husband is away from home and has not fixed the time when he will return, does his wife ask for a sign that she may not be taken by surprise? Do the children desire a *sign* of the father's approach? No, the absence is all too long for the beloved and loving hearts which the husband or the father has left behind; he may come at any moment —could not come at an unwelcome one! And do *we* need a sign of our Saviour's approach? No, no, let the heavenly bridegroom come; the bride is ready for

Him in all the blessed readiness in which His hand has arrayed her. The cry of her heart is, "Come, Lord Jesus." *He* says, "I come quickly." *She* responds, "Come, Lord Jesus." He promises a *speedy* coming; she asks a *present* one. "The Spirit and the bride say, '*Come.*'"

For another class there is no sign either, "for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth." For those who are *at home* in this scene of sin, for those who belong to this world, for "those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them," and for the "evil servant" who "says in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming"—for such Christ will come "as a thief in the night." The thief gives no sign when he is coming. It would frustrate his purposes to give a sign to indicate his approach.

But to a third class, the believing remnant in Israel that is waiting for Christ, He does give indications by which these godly Jews may know that their redemption draweth nigh. They will need this encouragement in that terrible time of tribulation. They will taste the bitter fruits of the rejection of Christ. In the sorrows through which Christians are called to pass, there may be chastening, but there is never *wrath.* In that great tribulation, however, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be, "there will be indignation and wrath." Thank God we are, through grace, strangers to these. Christ has emptied the cup of judgment and wrath. Ours is a cup of purest blessing.

But Israel's trouble will not be the fellowship of

Christ's sufferings. It will be suffering for sin under the righteous government of God. In the pious ones of that day will be realized the appeal of the prophet, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord." (Isa. l. 10.) The Christian *as such* never walks in darkness. If he does not know his high calling or if he is not true to it, he is not walking as a Christian. The Christian's calling is to "walk in the light, as God is in the light." "If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John i. 6.) "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12.

If *we* from whom God *never* hides His face—if we need all the encouragement God has given us, how will this remnant of the darkest days need the signs He has given of the Lord's speedy intervention!

"And he spake to them a parable, Behold the fig-tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." For this remnant it is that the Sun of righteousness appears. But let us look very briefly at their condition when He appears, as that condition is presented in some of the Psalms. We shall then better appreciate the "healing in his wings" with which the Sun of righteousness arises. Two or three of these must suffice, both because of the shortness of the time and the

elementary character of these addresses; but the great body of the Psalms consists of the experience of the earthly people of God in the circumstances which have just been spoken of. The Psalms for the most part express the experience and feelings produced in the people of God in that dark day by the Holy Ghost. The blessed Lord associates Himself with the sorrow of this people in precious and marvellous sympathy. Many of the Psalms express that which the Lord experienced as taking His place in grace and in sympathy with this faithful remnant.

It is important to bear in mind that the condition of things contemplated in such Psalms as these I am bringing before you, is that which will be found during the time that the church is no longer on earth, and when the Lord takes account again of Israel as a people, and deals with it as such.

Let us read part of Psalm lxxix., "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and

laid waste his dwelling-place." This is the cry of godly people "round about Jerusalem." They have faith in God, but their circumstances are such as to test faith to the uttermost, and they can but cry, "How long, Lord?" Their experiences and their cry are suited to the "time of Jacob's trouble." It is that time of trouble of which the Lord says, "If the days were not shortened, no flesh should be saved, but for the elect's sake "those days shall be shortened." Those here called the "elect" and those who cry, "Why should the heathen say, where is their God?" are evidently not Christians, but Jews. They are doubtless converted, but they remain Jews. At the present time if a Jew is converted, he ceases to be a Jew and becomes a Christian, a member of the body of Christ—the church. After the church has been removed God will deal again with Israel. In this Psalm then we find converted Jews who cry out for vengeance and whose cry is produced in them by the Spirit of Christ. This cry has seemed strange and unaccountable to many a child of God. But all is rendered intelligible by the plain and simple consideration that *now* God is acting in grace—purest and perfect *grace*, and He calls us who owe all to His grace to walk in it and manifest it. By-and-by God will act in judgment and His Spirit will then produce suited sentiments and feelings in the hearts of His people. Contrast with the spirit of grace which the Lord Himself shewed here below, whether in His life or on the cross when He cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—contrast this, I say, with the prayers of this Psalm, put into the mouth

of the remnant in Israel. To take up now *for ourselves* the language of this Psalm would be to deny Christianity. Alas! what dishonour has been done to the name of Christ, and what sad darkness has been brought into the soul by Christians taking this Jewish ground and adopting these Jewish sentiments. But when the time has come, these prayers and cries for vengeance will express the then present action of God. *Faith sets a soul* WITH GOD. *Now* He is shewing grace. Faith delights in it and manifests it. *Then* God will be pouring out His providential judgments, preparatory to the Lord's executing judgment in person. Faith calls for vengeance and cries "How long?"

Let us look very briefly at this Psalm. An enemy has devoured Jerusalem, he has shed the blood of the saints of God like water. But the cry which this wickedness and cruelty calls forth from the remnant is one utterly unsuited for the lips of the Christian. He cries, with Stephen, filled with the Spirit of His Master, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He desires and cries for grace for His enemies, not for their destruction. But when God's judgments are about to be poured upon these heathen, the Spirit of Christ cries, "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place."

In like manner in Psalm lxxxiii., where there is still deeper trouble, we find a yet more profound cry for vengeance, "Keep not silence, O God; hold not thy peace and be not still, O God. For, lo, thine enemies have

made a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." A little lower down, verse 9: "Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. . . . O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood. . . . So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm."

This is the cry, I repeat, of the Spirit of God in a remnant of the latter day that cannot be mingled with the prayers that Spirit produces in us—which cannot even belong to the same period of time. That it *is* not in the same period is shewn by a consideration of the book of Revelation. It is only in chapters iv., v. that the church, which has disappeared from the earth, is seen in heaven. Already in chapter vi. and *for the first time in the New Testament* we meet with a cry for vengeance! It is the same cry we find in the Psalms, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" Later on (chap. xi.) we find the testimony of God in the three years and a half which would seem to answer to the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel, immediately preceding the time of unexampled trouble, out of which (see Dan. xii. 1) Israel is to be delivered. And what characterises this testimony? "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and

devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy, and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." Revelation xi. 5, 6.

What a contrast between this and the present time when "grace reigns through righteousness!" Luke ix. 54–56 will well illustrate this time of grace, and shew the contrast between it and that which is to follow, but which *cannot* be until the church is with Christ above. "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, *but to save:* and they went to another village." The contrast is so great that we could not reconcile these different ways of God did we not know that it is *after* the church is gathered home that God begins to assert His claims upon earth, raises a suited testimony and puts into the hearts and lips of earthly saints sentiments suited to His action toward the earth.

These prophetic Psalms will find their fulfilment at the same period of which Daniel, the blessed Lord and the book of Revelation have told us. Their cry for vengeance on the enemy will find its answer in the rising upon the faithful ones in Israel of the Sun of righteousness, whose beams, healing for them, will be scorching and withering for those who have "de-

voured Jacob and laid waste his dwelling-place." In Psalm cii. this deliverance is dwelt upon in a very clear and interesting way. There is not time to enlarge upon it, but you will remark the simple and close way in which it connects what we have already seen as to the remnant with the appearing of the Lord in glory to build Zion. Notice particularly that it speaks of "the time to favour her (Zion), yea, the set time." The Spirit of God anticipates it; "the set time," He says, "is come." The result is, "So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" Verses 15, 16.

This brings us naturally and with unspeakable relief to the portion read from Malachi. No doubt we shall still find terrible judgments; for the Sun of righteousness will chase away unsparingly all the "works of darkness" and all the "workers of iniquity." But "healing" is already come when the Sun of righteousness has arisen. For those who are "confederate against" the God of Israel and even for the mass of the nation, in league with Antichrist, the day of the Lord "shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Here it is not exclusively nor even specially "the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name" that are judged by the Lord's appearing. It is more particularly the mass of the nation who are as "proud" and do as "wickedly" as when the One who is coming was amongst them in

grace. That "evil and adulterous generation," that "generation of vipers" will not have passed away, "when the Lord shall suddenly come to his temple." Last week we saw the pride and blasphemous arrogance of Antichrist. We shall see next week, if the Lord will, that the Roman Prince, doubtless by means of this wicked king "shall confirm a covenant with the many (that is, the mass of the nation) for one week." For a moment all this shall appear to succeed; he "shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished." They shall "call the proud happy, yea, they that work wickedness are set up." In that day when, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," how precious to the Lord will be the remnant that fears Him and that thinks upon His name! "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" (special treasure, margin). Ah yes, they thought on His name even in the dark days of Antichrist, whether as seducer or oppressor. They fear the name of Jehovah when the nation who receives him that "comes in his own name" has ceased either to serve God or to fear the Lord's name. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings."

The Morning Star will not be more welcome to the saints who have waited for Him in the dark night of His absence, than will be the Sun of righteousness for those who have held fast to the fear of Jehovah even when they had to say, "Wilt thou be angry for ever?" Their warfare will have been accomplished, their iniquity pardoned, when the healing beams of the Sun of right-

eousness rise upon them. Dark has been their night! The heathen in God's inheritance, shedding the blood of the saints like water, and worse still "the many" in Israel—"corrupt are they and have done abominable iniquity!" Amid all this they have themselves the consciousness that God is chastening them for their sins. They "walk in darkness," as we have already seen. How dark then the night which the Sun of righteousness chases away! What "healing in his wings" that calls from their lips the joyous exclamation, "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

In Zechariah xiii. 8, 9, we find the mass of the nation cut off by judgments. "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

Those that fear the Lord, for whose deliverance He appears, answer to the "third part" who say, "Jehovah is my God." We must bear in mind the hold that Antichrist will have in the day we are considering upon the guilty nation that rejected Christ. "I am come," says the blessed Lord, "in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." (John v. 43.) This wicked one will induce the nation to cast off the worship of

Jehovah. He will himself take the place of God in His temple. (See 2 Thess. ii. 4; Dan. xi. 36, 37.) "The third part," whom God will bring through the time of unparalleled tribulation and whom He "will try as gold is tried," will cling to the worship of Jehovah. He "will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." These will form the nation whom the Lord at His appearing will bring into fullest blessing upon earth.

This appearing of Christ is given a few verses later on (Zech. xiv. 4): "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east. . . . And the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee." It was from this mountain that the disciples saw the Lord go up into heaven. (See Acts i. 11, 12.) It was there they were told that "this same Jesus shall *so* come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Here in Zechariah we see Him come. It is the *same* Jesus—it is in *like* manner! It was no mystic ascension, it will be no mystic coming. He was *seen* to go, He will be *seen* to come. His beloved disciples beheld with wondering and worshipping eyes as He, who had been pierced, receded from their gaze. The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem "shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one is in bitterness for his firstborn." Zechariah xii. 10.

There is no real blessing for any child of man without repentance, and "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." But oh, what "healing"

beams will stream from that Sun of righteousness for the repentant nation that of old cried, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Yes, it has long been *on* them in answer to their awful imprecation. At length it is *on* them in all its cleansing, healing power! Thank God for the depth of His boundless mercy! The "balm of Gilead" is found at last; the physician, "the Lord that healeth thee" is come! Precious blood of Christ that cleanses even the sin of shedding it! "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." Isaiah lix. 20.

The dark night of Israel's "casting away" is passed; "she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." The bright day "that the Lord hath made" has now broken in the peaceful healing beams of the Sun of righteousness; sorrow and mourning have for ever fled away.

Ah! the Redeemer, come to Zion, has made "the place of his feet glorious!" And what is that place? "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives." They have trodden that mountain before; when in the days of His humiliation and rejection others went "every man to his own house, Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." Blessed One who in purest grace was a homeless wanderer, without "where to lay his head!" But all is changed now. His obedience unto death, His giving His life a ransom for many, has won "for the rebellious also" the pardon of "her iniquity." His grace has called out the cry from a repentant rejoicing heart, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah!"

But who are they that come with him? We have seen before, we shall see again, God willing, that the saints come with Him to the earth, who have already been taken up by "His coming, and our gathering together unto him." Marvel not, my friends, at the depths of the counsels of God's boundless grace. He has given "the bride the Lamb's wife" to the blessed Man of His counsels. "Bone of his bone" is she! "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." (Eph. v. 29, 30.) Ay, and in that happy company of heavenly saints, there are others besides "the bride," for "blessed are they that are *called to* the marriage supper of the Lamb." That marriage is passed—the bride is for ever united to her Lord; and now she and all the blessed guests who have drunk with her Lord in the Father's kingdom the wine of joy His blood has purchased—all come forth. They bring the morning of joy for the people scattered and peeled that look for redemption in Israel; "For his anger endureth but a moment: in his favour is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING." (Ps. xxx. 5.) How the rich streams of divine grace toward Israel will gladden our hearts! Already surely, they thrill with joy as we read of this Zion to which "the Redeemer" will come "with his saints:" "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning are ended. My people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of *my* planting, the work of *my* hand, that *I may be glorified*."

Blessed be His name, God loves Israel for the fathers' sake. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He may create, and so to say, repent, but He never chooses and repents. His *gifts* and His *calling* are without repentance. Oh, if they were not without repentance, what would become of *us* in our weakness and failure! If we could not trust God as one that never changes, what should *we* do? And if He never changes for us, he never changes for Israel. The word of God was pledged to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, with words of promise that shall be fulfilled in God's own good time. Nor His *word* alone. His *heart* is engaged (as we shall see, if the Lord will, another time) in Israel's blessing—"the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

In the "seed" of Abraham, in the Son of David, shall all these promises be fulfilled. David could sing in the day God delivered him, of the great "Son of David" a song of remarkable beauty to which I will refer, and then close for to-night. In 2 Samuel xxiii. 3, "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." If we read the last few words in the abrupt form they have in Hebrew, their direct application to Christ becomes more evident. They would read, I am told, literally translated: "The ruler, the just one, the ruler in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Who is "the ruler, the

just one, the ruler in the fear of God?" In this Psalm it is the Son of David.

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!"

In Isaiah xi. it is the "rod from the stem of Jesse," the "branch out of his roots." "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." In Psalm lxxii. it is "the King and the King's Son." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." It is the One who has been before us as the Sun of righteousness that has risen upon Israel with healing in His wings. It is He, beloved; it is He alone that shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds! How cloudless that morning for Israel, long trodden down, long scattered and peeled! A cloudless morning, too, for the earth defiled by the trail of that "old serpent, the devil," bound at last by the returning Lord! A cloudless morning for the spared among the Gentiles! "To it [the root of Jesse] shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." A cloudless morning for the earth, "when the *Sun* riseth:" the beginning of His peaceful reign of righteousness. "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Ps. lxvii. 6, 7.

And now before we separate let me ask you, if the Lord Jesus were to come to call the church up to

be with Him to-night, would you be ready to meet Him? It is a solemn question: it is an all-important one. I do not know when the Lord will come; I have no pretension to know *the time* of the Lord's coming. My heart tells me it will be soon; and two things of an outward nature speak the same language. Infidelity, though still covering itself with the forms of Christianity, grows with sorrowful rapidity. Indeed all the moral characteristics of the state the Lord will find when He *appears* are more and more pronounced, even before our "gathering together unto him." But on the other hand, God's grace has perhaps never won so many souls for Christ as of late. That grace is saying, "Yet there is room" with an emphasis and a power which seem to shew that the table it has spread is well-nigh furnished with guests.

At all events, you have seen from scripture that Christians are called to be waiting for Him *now*. And if I cannot tell you when He will come, neither can *you* tell me He will *not* come before another sun shines upon this earth. Oh, would you meet Him with joy? Are you already His? Believe me, my heart yearns over you who cannot say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me;" "in whom" *I* "have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins." Oh hasten to His open arms, I pray you! Think of your danger! Your lot is cast in the last days of the lingering grace of Him that wills not "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." May the love that gave an only-begotten Son lead you to repentance! May the lingering long-suffering that still

leaves the door of mercy open, oh, may it lead you to repentance! And what if alas! it should not! Think, my unsaved hearer, for whose salvation I sigh, oh! think of your solemn, your awful doom! When the Lord is "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," every soul who has refused to repent—every soul who has not believed the witness of God concerning His Son "will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." The GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH is coming; it hastens apace! Flee to the Saviour! *By Him* believe *in God* who gave Him in grace—*now*, I entreat you, NOW!

"THY SUN SHALL NO MORE GO DOWN; NEITHER SHALL THY MOON WITHDRAW ITSELF, FOR THE LORD SHALL BE THINE EVERLASTING LIGHT, AND THE DAYS OF THY MOURNING SHALL BE ENDED."

LECTURE IV.

THE

STONE CUT OUT WITHOUT HANDS.

> "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Read Daniel ii. 31–45.

On former occasions we have seen that the Lord's second coming includes (1) His coming into the air where He receives the saints to Himself, and (2) His coming to the earth accompanied by the saints. The beautiful figure under which He is presented to us in the first part, is that of the Morning Star. How evidently divine the wisdom which has chosen such a figure! The church of God's purpose is, as regards this world, a homeless stranger passing the night of His absence without a resting-place, and not seeking to sleep because she is "not of the night." After long watching, but while darkness still covers the scene where her Lord had not where to lay His head, and where she treads (peace deep in the soul) the path of His rejection, she at length

beholds the Morning Star. The lethargy of moral death is around her, a sleep far too deep to be disturbed by the gentle rays so welcome to her. Her rising to meet her Lord is as little connected with the world, and as little disturbs it, as did the softened light which greeted her sleepless eyes.

The world goes on undisturbed. It may breathe more freely now that she who bore her Lord's testimony that "the deeds thereof are evil" is no longer here. All restraint is removed, and the world ripens for judgment. But God has purposes for that dark day; the depths of His mercy are not exhausted. And when at length the Lord comes *to the earth* with His saints, there is a people to say, "This is our God, we have waited for him." But now it is the bright shining of the Sun of righteousness! The earth must answer in every part of it to these beams of brightness and strength. They are healing for those who cry, "We have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." But all those who "hate the light" are put to shame. The ravening lions, when "the sun ariseth, lay them down in their dens." Thank God! "the kingdom is the Lord's and he is governor among the nations."

We have now to consider the establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon earth by an act of judgment which destroys the kingdom He finds in power when He appears. Let me recall to you a passage quoted last week from the gospel of Luke, which will form a key to a considerable part of our subject this evening: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." There is, then,

a term to the present desolation of Jerusalem. It is not to "be trodden down of the Gentiles" for ever. It is only "*until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." To the inhabitants of that same guilty but beloved city, the Lord Jesus said, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. xxiii. 39.) He will not hide His face for ever—nor will He be hidden in God for ever. "The inhabitants of Jerusalem . . . . shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son." Filled with godly sorrow that they have rejected and pierced Him, they shall hail Him, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

It is the Lord's return in judgment as we are about to see, that puts an end to "the times of the Gentiles," and that terminates their treading down Jerusalem. It is when He thus returns that the repentant daughter of Zion cries, in holy chastened joy, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

What, then, are we to understand by the expression, "the times of the Gentiles?" It means the period during which the Gentile Empires exercise the power committed by God to Nebuchadnezzar, when His long-suffering could no longer support Israel in the place of power in this world. It includes however the present period of non-existence of the last or Roman Empire, and also the last form of that Empire when Satan will give it its power. The times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar, and end with the destruction of "the Beast" of Revelation.

But to understand these times it will be necessary to consider the place God gave Israel in the earth, the place she would always have had but for utter unfaithfulness in it and even direct rebellion against God. According to God's purpose Israel is the first of the nations and their centre—"the head and not the tail." Keep very distinctly before your minds, let me beg you, the truth, essential for the understanding of God's ways, that His present action in gathering the church is apart altogether from the order of earthly events. A consideration drawn from the book we have chiefly before us to-night must make this clear. It is that the whole period in which the church is being gathered out occurs between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel. This may seem strange to some who have not looked into it, but there is nothing clearer than that the 69 weeks, from "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah," have had their course. No Christian can deny this; for the Messiah has come. We shall see this evening that the Messiah was "cut off and had nothing;" as you may read in your margins. This interrupts the course of time as scripture reckons it, however strange this may seem.

The Gentiles may think a great deal of, and even pride themselves upon, all the events that are happening in this world now, during these eighteen hundred years; but in scripture this time is not counted at all. All the present time of ceaseless activity and progress; all this time of stirring events which men think so important and into which they enter with such avidity, is simply *unaccounted for* in the reckoning of the

word of God. The 69th week is passed, the terrible events of the 70th week are yet future, and cannot begin while the church is here. The truth is, God is doing a heavenly work now. He has sent down heavenly grace in the Person of His own Son. He has sent down the Holy Ghost to gather out a bride for Christ.

When Messiah had come, and Israel, clamouring for His death, answered the challenge of the Gentile ruler, "Shall I crucify your king?" with "we have no king but Cæsar;" God took occasion in His infinite wisdom to do a blessed work that was ever present to his heart. This work He had counselled before the foundation of the world; He would gather out a bride that should be associated with Christ in the day of His glory, that should be united to Him even before the day of glory came. Israel's rejection of their Messiah interrupted the course of time as regards God's ways for the earth and presented the occasion for the development of this deepest and most blessed counsel of God's wisdom and goodness.

The church, then, is being gathered out in a period not counted in the history of the world, and it is, according to the purpose of God and in its character and calling, a thing apart from the earth. No doubt Christians walk upon the earth and have responsibilities there, but scripture says that their "conversation (or citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour." We have before seen, and it is essential we should bear in mind that the calling of the Christian and his hope are entirely apart from earthly events.

But that it is Israel which is specially before God's

mind, when it is a question of the earth, we shall see very distinctly from a passage in Deuteronomy xxxii. 8. If we were Gentiles, which we who are Christians are not, this would indeed be a very humbling story for us. We were Gentiles before we were converted. But scripture speaks of three classes: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." This shews that the Christian, whether a Jew or a Gentile before his conversion, belongs now to a third class: the church of God. But it is an humbling thing certainly for Gentiles that "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Yet are they words of divine wisdom, as well as of divine truth; and if we would understand the ways of God we shall do well to take heed to them.

Hundreds of years before the nation of Israel existed; long before even the birth of Abraham; "when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance;" Israel was before His all-seeing eye. All His purposes for the earth centred around this people, beloved for the fathers' sake. He saw not only a "faithful Abraham" before he existed, but He saw the people, both the stiff-necked people they have hitherto been, and the "people willing in the day of thy power" which ere long, they will be. Above all He saw, in counsels of grace, the blessed Lord, "mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," at the head of this people.

This blessed One is the centre of all God's ways. When we see Him, "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8); when we hear Jehovah say, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 6), we need not be surprised at the high calling of Israel. The One who "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," and has given Christ "the head over all things to the church," has chosen Israel as the centre under Christ of His direct government in this world.

The sad history of Israel when God had placed them in His land and subdued their enemies beneath their feet, is but too well known. The days of the "man after God's own heart," and those of the king's son were bright days for Israel, and it might have been thought that God's purpose for Israel was accomplished. But this needed "a greater than Solomon." Blessed of God in the earth as no other had been blessed, Solomon alas! proved utterly unfaithful in his responsibility to God. All the greatness He had given, all the magnificence of the mighty kingdom He had bestowed, was prostrated before the "abominations" of the nations which were vassals of his throne. The kingdom is rent. The greater number of tribes follow a series of idolatrous kings. The two tribes, faithful to the house of David, were seldom altogether free from open idolatry, and often alas! established it in God's chosen Zion, and even in the very house in which He had placed His name.

But God had amazing patience. Long did He for

David's sake "give him a lamp in Jerusalem." It is most touching to read in the prophets what the heart of God was and *is* towards Israel. Oh! His lingering longsuffering! At length, however, Jehovah's name can no longer be associated with all the idols and all the pollution of even the house of David, and God transfers power from Israel to the Gentiles. The glory of God retires from Jerusalem. It has never returned. God has no longer a throne upon earth—it is "the heavens" that rule. "The God of heaven" gives to Nebuchadnezzar "a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." The people of God, now disowned, are carried into captivity.

A remnant of Jews returned from Babylon, if not to wield power in the earth, at least to dwell in the land of their fathers. But how little they answered to the goodness of God even in this humbler period of their history! And alas! when God in boundless mercy sends their long-promised Messiah, they attribute His miracles (always beneficent) to the power of Satan; they reject Him utterly, and soon "crucify and slay" Him. Yet had He come at the very moment their prophets, at least Daniel, had said He would come, and with all possible signs of divine mission. John had come in the spirit and power of Elias. But ah! God stretches out His hand to "a disobedient and gainsaying people." The one who prepares the Lord's way "has a devil." The chosen One of God, amongst them in tenderest, divinest grace, is "a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" Israel *will not have* her Messiah. And what then, does God do? Does He abandon Israel as a

nation? Certainly He has scattered her to the four winds of heaven; but has He scattered her for ever? Has He taken His mercy away from the nation of Israel? Assuredly no! for in that very death to which that wicked and rebellious nation put the Lord of glory, scripture assures us that "he died for that nation." No doubt, there were other purposes answered in that wondrous, that fruitful death. He died to "gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad." That is, He died that the church of God might be formed. Moreover, He "gave himself a ransom for all." He even "tasted death for every (man)." But so far from "that nation" being for ever set aside as a nation because of their definite rejection of their Messiah, it was in His death that the solid, righteous foundation of their blessing as a nation was laid. The death of Christ has a special and unique application to the nation of Israel. For the individuals that formed Israel, of course, He died, as He died for all men; but if that were all the passage meant, it would certainly not have specified the *nation* of Israel as an object of the death of Christ. Those individual Jews who *then* received the blessing brought in by the death of Christ, or who now receive it, are "added to the church," whilst the nation is still in unbelief. You will remark two purposes are specified in this text as answered by the death of Christ. 1. The blessing of the nation of Israel; "it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not;" He died for that nation. 2. The church of God is to be gathered: "that he might gather together in one the children of

God that were scattered abroad." As surely then as the blessing of the church springs from the death of Christ, so surely does the blessing of the nation of Israel flow from that same death.

Let us turn for a moment to Romans xi. that we may see the full light of God upon the whole question of the present "casting off" of Israel. There is not time, and it is not necessary to go through the whole chapter now; a brief consideration of a very small portion of it will satisfy any mind that desires to know the truth that God has not cast off his people *as a people*. You will bear in mind the immense difference between the conversion of individuals and the recognition of a people. In the present period, while the church is being called out, if a Jew is converted, he is no longer a Jew according to the mind and word of God, he becomes a member of the church of God. He will be a part of the bride to all eternity. But we read here, verse 12, "If the fall of them (Israel) was the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Verse 15—"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" There is then, my brethren, to be "the fulness" of Israel; there is to be the "receiving of them." Mark well these expressions, for they are in *contrast* to their present condition. No doubt a Jew, who now believes in Christ, is "received," accepted of God. This is as true of a Jew as of a Gentile, "for there is no difference." But the "receiving of them" is in contrast with their present "casting off."

Nationally, they are for a time disowned. This gives occasion to a work which could not go on whilst Israel was recognised as the people of God upon earth, and consequently the middle wall of partition was maintained. Their "fulness," however, "the receiving of them," nationally, is here announced by the Spirit of God and is hastening apace. Again, verse 25—"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." "Blindness in part is happened *until*"—not *for ever*. The nation is given over judicially to blindness—not all the individuals, for Paul was one. Indeed, there were five thousand Jews converted within a few days of Pentecost; but, was that the nation of Israel? Nay, they lost their nationality at the very moment of their baptism into the body of Christ. They became a heavenly people. They were linked to Christ in heaven; they had a heavenly calling and a heavenly hope.

But this *national* blindness has a limit. God has said "until," His name of boundless grace be praised! But what are we to understand by "All Israel shall be saved?" Evidently, the opposite of what we find at present. Israel, *as a whole*, is a gainsaying people, cast off for a time, "blind in part until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." But individuals are being saved and added to the church. *Now*, Israel, as a whole, is unbelieving and lost; *then*, Israel, as a whole, will be saved. For "it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Hence

they are not only to be blessed in the earth, but they are to be *saved*. They are to be converted and brought to the knowledge of God. Their calling will be an earthly one, for the kingdom of God will not only have its heavenly glory, but also its earthly. God has purposed, and will accomplish, the manifestation of His goodness and His grace in the very earth in which man has revolted against Him. And as to the nation in which, above all others, unfaithfulness, ingratitude, and blood-guiltiness, have been *most* seen, He will magnify His mercy in putting that nation at the head of all the nations. Oh, ways of deepest mercy! How worthy of our God! We, at least, who owe so much to His grace, *we* should not be astonished at it! That such should be the way of grace in a later day cannot surprise those who have heard the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, say to His disciples, as He sends them with the message of purest heavenly mercy, "Beginning at Jerusalem."

"For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Mark it—"when I shall take away their sins." "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." We are come to the very *focus* of divine light! Israel's separate place to God was a matter of election: it was not a matter of creation. By a strong figure, God is said to repent of having created; but never, never, is He said to repent of His grace. *Never* is He said to repent of His electing love! "The gifts and calling of God are without

repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed in your mercy, that they might obtain mercy." I have read the passage in a manner very slightly different from the authorized version, but, in a way which gives the sense, I believe, more simply and correctly. Israel does not believe in the mercy of God to the Gentiles. An earnest Jew who continues in unbelief about Christ (and he would cease to be a Jew and become a Christian, if he believed in Christ) does not believe that God's mercy has gone out to the Gentiles at all. The Jews have refused to believe in the mercy of God to the Gentiles, and have thus refused the gospel. If then they are saved at all, it must be on the ground of *mercy*, for they have lost all *right*. "Even so have these also now not believed in your mercy, that they might obtain mercy (or, 'become objects of mercy'), for God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

God grant, beloved brethren, that the meditation upon the ways of God may call forth worship from our hearts as it did from the heart of the apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" And is it not worthy of the wisdom and grace of God that when He has accomplished His present good work in the church, and the bride of Christ is gathered home, Israel as a whole shall be saved? Yes, thank God, such grace is worthy of Him! And He

will soon manifest it. "A *nation* shall be born in a day." "The deliverer shall come forth out of Sion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Depths of mercy! "Unsearchable riches of Christ!" But what shall we say of the work of Calvary—of "the precious blood of Christ?" It has won for us heavenly glory—it has won for Israel their salvation, and their place of glory in the kingdom. It has won for God *all* the trophies of His grace. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

These considerations will help us in considering the times of the Gentiles. When Israel had proved herself entirely unworthy of exercising authority on the part of God in this world, God commits the place of supremacy, in the government of the world, to Nebuchadnezzar, but not until He had waited long—not until He had, times without number, warned His people by the prophets, "rising up early and sending them, but they would not hear." The Zion God had chosen, was filled with idols. In the very house of God, whilst still owned as His house, the altar of God made place for an idolatrous one. More than once were the "abominations" of the surrounding nations placed there; and those who filled the throne of God in Israel did not fear to sacrifice their children to these abominations.

At length the long-suffering of God had reached its term according to the wisdom and righteousness of God. His majesty and His holiness would endure it no longer; Israel was sent into captivity, and power was transferred to the hands of the Gentiles. Never, until the unfaithfulness of Israel had given full occasion for it, could one

nation attain the supremacy that the Chaldeans attained in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. He owed his greatness, little as he at first knew it or thought of it, to the unfaithfulness of Israel. Had the people of God maintained the name of Jehovah; had Israel been faithful to her God, the lamp of David would have burned as brightly as ever in Jerusalem. But the name of God was blasphemed through Israel. He wrote upon that "people laden with iniquity:" "NOT MY PEOPLE." He cast down His throne at Jerusalem, and "the times of the Gentiles" began. These have run on to the present time, and will run on until the time when "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands" strikes the image in its feet.

Let us now consider this image for a moment. Its meaning is given us by God and is remarkably simple. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar. We have nothing to do with him to-night, except as the one to whom God gave supreme power, and who handed it down first to the Medo-Persians, then to the Grecians, and lastly to the Romans. Nor need we consider this evening the two empires which succeeded the Chaldean. We shall have to dwell upon the last, or Roman Empire, because it is upon it that summary judgment is executed by the terrific stroke of "the stone cut out without hands."

Need we enquire who or what is set forth by "the Stone?" I am sure, in a company like this, it is unnecessary to prove that the Stone is Christ and His kingdom. In Luke xx. 18, we read, "Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken;" setting forth

alas! unbelieving, Christ-rejecting Israel, for whom an humbled Christ was "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." "But on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder;" setting forth the terrible judgment which a glorified Christ, returning in power, will exercise.

But when does Christ or His kingdom strike the image? It is clear that this striking has nothing to do with the gospel, as has been strangely imagined. For, in the first place, the stone does not gradually displace the image, as the profession of Christianity has displaced heathenism in these lands. It is not *until it has struck the image, and by this stroke destroyed it*, that it becomes a mountain and fills the whole earth. It does not enlarge until the image has ceased to exist. It is not the gospel then.

But, in the second place, neither has Christ nor the gospel ever struck the image. So far from Christ striking it, it was the representative of the Roman power that sentenced Christ to death. The image might, indeed, be said to strike Him. As to the gospel, it is not its province to strike imperial powers, good or bad, but to win the hearts of sinners, to exercise their consciences, and to save their souls. But if it be contended the gospel is meant, *when* did the stroke fall upon the image which by one blast destroyed it before that which smote, enlarged, or spread in any degree?

But again it is "upon his feet that were of iron and clay" that the image was struck. This is absolutely conclusive, for to this day the "toes of the feet part of iron and part of clay" do not exist. It is not only expressly said that the stone strikes the image here, that

is, in its last and mixed condition, but it is added, "*In the days of these kings* shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." Did Christ come or was the gospel sent out "in the time of *these kings*?" Was not "iron" Rome, then free from the admixture of clay? Where were the ten kings then? The "decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed," tells, not of separate kingdoms with an imperial head, but of an Emperor with undisputed sway. When we consider the last form of the Roman Empire in the book of Revelation, we shall see this point more clearly. For the present it is enough to notice that at the time of the exercise of destructive judgment the part of the image struck, Rome, has at once the imperial unity set forth by the image, and divided subordinate authority set forth by the toes. The barbarian element (clay) is mixed with the iron power of Rome, and there is a condition in which, whilst unity is maintained, there are ten kings. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Surely I need scarcely insist it is the Lord at His coming, not only judging the apostate religious scene, as we have already found He does, but destroying all authority and power which has set itself against "the Lord and His Christ." The first act of Christ's "power and kingdom" will be to destroy all the evil powers and kingdoms it finds. He will then reign in undisputed and beneficent majesty—a reign which will never give place to another.

And will you, my dear hearers, reign with Him? I have more than once shewn from scripture, and more than once pressed upon you the truth, that the saints rise to meet the Lord in the air before this exercise of power, and are in His train when the judgment is poured out. I cannot too strongly nor too often press this. If you are saved through the blood of the Lamb you will be with Him above, *before* "the days of these kings," when "the God of heaven sets up a kingdom." If you are *now* united to Christ in heaven by the Holy Ghost, who ever seals the faith which rests in the person and work of Christ, your heart will have found its perfect repose in His presence before the stone shivers to dust the proud image of Gentile power in rebellion against God. And when He shall "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" your blessing shall be, not only deliverance yourself from judgment, but a place near His faithful gracious heart when He executes it.

But let me once more warn any who are not in Christ. "The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision." God in His providence has wrought, within the last few years, very great changes in the countries which once formed part, and will form part again, of the Roman Empire. Added to great political changes there are moral movements among both the Jews and the Gentiles, as well in the East as here in the West, that tend very evidently toward the accomplishment of God's purposes in the crisis which approaches. Far be it from me to turn the eye towards *events* upon earth instead of to Christ in heaven! But I do warn you by every consideration that the end approaches. You, who are unsaved,

have cause for alarm in thinking of the future of these lands. *You* may see the Roman Empire re-formed and live in the days of the beast! *You* may receive his mark and perish in his judgment! The shivering stroke of that "Stone cut out without hands" may fall upon that of which *you* form part. Oh, be warned to-night! If you will but come now, as a guilty ruined sinner, to God through Jesus Christ, you may be built upon that precious corner-stone, that sure foundation! Pardon and peace are announced to you in His name now. Cleansing and peace for your conscience and a satisfying portion for your heart are presented in the work and person of Christ. Flee to Him, I pray you! For, bear it solemnly in mind—not only upon the last form of Gentile power in open revolt against God, but also upon Christless professors, upon gospel-hardened sinners, upon those who "turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," that stone will fall! "*Upon* WHOMSOEVER *it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*"

In Daniel vii. we find further particulars of the judgment executed upon the Roman power by the Lord at His coming. Our own place with Him in the exercise of His power is also brought before us. The empires which form the statue of chapter ii. are here presented under other forms. With the first three we have not to occupy ourselves this evening. But in verse 7 we come to the fourth beast which answers to the legs and feet of the image, and is of sad and solemn interest. "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth"—still the same figure of iron, you will

observe. "It devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."

How strikingly the great features which characterized the Roman Empire are here given, has been often remarked, and not by believers only, but even (alas! for them) by infidels. The feature, however, which most interests us just now, and which most distinguishes this beast from the others, is that it has ten horns. Thus the Roman empire is seen in its final form; doubtless because it then draws upon itself the judgment of God, which destroys it utterly, to make room for the kingdom of the Son of man. In our Lord's days and in those of the apostles, this fourth beast was in full power, but it had not then ten kings. Upon this I need not dwell, because it is so simple and obvious. It has never yet had the form we here find, namely, "a beast," that is a great empire, and at the same time "ten horns," or ten subordinate ruling powers, ten *kings*. No doubt when the empire was broken up, a number of kingdoms were formed. But this would not have answered to the description here, even if there had been ten such, neither more nor less; for when the kingdoms were formed, the beast or empire had ceased to exist. When we have before us this empire as presented in Revelation, it will appear with perfect clearness that the last form it is to

take, will differ from the old empire in the way just remarked.

But whilst these ten kingdoms are seen in the Roman empire, another ruling power arises within it which puts down three of the ten kings, and becomes such a preponderating power that the beast, or empire, is judged and destroyed, "because of the great words which the horn spake." We shall see in Revelation xiii. that the beast had "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." For the present, I would only remark how clear it is that the little horn uses the whole power of the beast. The same words are applied to the little horn of Daniel and to the beast of Revelation. The judgment comes upon the beast because of these blasphemies.

The overwhelming and final judgment of this last representative of Gentile power is not now presented in the simple stroke of the stone which grinds it to powder, as we saw in chapter ii.; here there is a judicial tribunal. It is still the Lord executing judgment in person, for He is the Ancient of days. But "thrones are set" and "books are opened;" it is an all-searching judgment, solemn, decisive, eternal! "I beheld till the thrones were *set* [for so it is generally admitted it should be translated], and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then, because of the voice of the

great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."

Solemn consideration that the land in which we live will form part of the system here presented as judged in a manner as irresistible, as it is searching and consuming! Europe long so privileged; Europe covered now with the profession of the name of Christ; Europe from which the Bible and the gospel have gone out to the ends of the earth; yes, the kingdoms of Europe formed again into a vast empire, shall be summoned before the Ancient of days! How will they stand before the blazing, searching brightness of His "throne, like the fiery flame!" And in presence of the fiery stream of judgment, what account will those kingdoms give of either their political power, or their spiritual privileges? Ah! all will be brought to light, secrets will all be revealed there! "The books were opened." Awful, unsparing judgment for the nations of Christendom! May all who hear me, come with the One who executes the judgment! May not one stand before the fiery flame of that fearful throne!

Final judgment is then executed upon the beast by the Ancient of days. He "was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." We find in Revelation xix. the same beast and his armies "gathered to make war against him that sat on the horse." "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet . . . . these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Fearful end of "the times of the Gentiles!" Whether under the form of the

stone striking the feet of the image, of the judgment before the Ancient of days delivering the beast to the burning flame, or of the "King of kings, and Lord of lords," casting the beast into the lake of fire, it is the same terrible end of Gentile power in this world.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed."

The effect of the destructive stroke of the stone upon the image was the establishment of the kingdom which the God of heaven will set up. Here the same judgment, seen under another and more judicial form, results in the establishment of the kingdom of the Son of man, as in Revelation the taking of the beast by the rider upon the white horse is followed by the Lord's reign of righteousness and peace for a thousand years. In these verses the blessed Lord is seen to receive as man, the kingdom from the hand of God—the Ancient of days. It is the kingdom upon earth, called in Revelation xi. 15, "the kingdom-of-the-world of our Lord and of His Christ," (see Greek) which succeeds the kingdom we have just seen destroyed.

We have had before us more than once the heavenly part of the kingdom of God, called the Father's kingdom. (Matt. xxvi. 29, and elsewhere.) This, its earthly part, is the kingdom of "the Son of man." It

is still man ruling, but man in the person of Christ, "the ruler, the just, the ruler in the fear of God." "His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." (Psa. lxxii. 17.) His is not a kingdom which gives place to another, as all preceding kingdoms have done. Although, not "the everlasting kingdom," in the absolute sense, it is such in the sense of never being displaced, and of existing in undiminished power and splendour, as long as there is a kingdom in the hands of man, "as long as the sun." His is the only kingdom never succeeded by another; the only one which endures until He folds up, as God, the sphere in which He has reigned as man! Yes, the Lord will reign as man, and as man He will deliver up "the kingdom to God even the Father . . . . that God, [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] may be all in all."

But here let me call your attention to a highly interesting view of the Lord, which comes out with much beauty in comparing this scene with Revelation i. In Daniel the Son of man is seen coming in the clouds of heaven, and is brought near before the Ancient of days, from whose hand He receives the kingdom. It is the blessed Lord as man coming indeed in glory (compare Matt. xxiv. 30; xxv. 31; xxvi. 64), but receiving the kingdom from God. When we turn to Revelation we are still in the presence of the "Son of man," but here He bears the features of majesty and glory we have seen in the Ancient of days. Thank God! We know it well, and I need not insist upon it, that the Son of man is "over all, God blessed for ever." But it is pure and

peaceful joy to the heart that owes all to the grace that brought Him so low, to see Him in all the majesty of divine glory whilst bearing the name, "Son of man." Woe to the heart that could take advantage of His humiliation, and dishonour Him because of His offering Himself "of His own voluntary will" to accomplish the precious counsels of the heart of God! What glory has *He* lost by that which has glorified the name of God and rejoiced His heart? *Lost!* nay, He has won a new character of love; "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." (John x. 17.) He has won the glory which the Father has given Him (John xvii.); He has won His present exaltation; "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." (Phil. ii. 9.) Wonders of redemption! The Son of man is already glorified in God. Soon every knee shall bow to the name of the once humbled Jesus! Every tongue, heavenly, earthly, or infernal, must own Him Lord. "The Son of man," whom John knew too well (he had pillowed his thrice happy head on His bosom,) to fail to identify Him, is seen in all the dazzling brightness of the Ancient of days. No wonder that the prophet in his tabernacle of clay should fall before Him as dead. But the hand of that blessed living One who had died, His "right hand," pierced as it is, can set him in peace, even in presence of such glory. Yes, blessed be His name for ever, the Son of man, once humbled low in grace for you and for me, is the Ancient of days!

"Fairer than all the earth-born race,
Perfect in comeliness Thou art,

Replenished are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart;
God ever blest! we bow the knee,
And own all fulness dwells in Thee."

A little lower down in this chapter we find an interpretation of this vision; but you are familiar with the principle that in scripture the explanations given are never *mere* explanations; they always add something. We have seen it before; we see it constantly. When God explains figures which He has been pleased to use, He always surpasses the revelation of truth contained in them, in the interpretation which He gives. This is an immense gain, seeing our God has so much to teach us, and that we are so slow to learn.

So here in the interpretation the saints are introduced. We have not seen them in the vision, but in the interpretation they take a most prominent place. Fresh details also are given as to the little horn and the period is revealed during which he will be allowed to change Jewish times and laws. As to the saints, we read (ver. 18), "but the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom." Instead of "Most High," you will read in the margin, "high ones; that is, things or places." The passage should read, "the saints of the high (places)." It refers to the heavenly saints, for as we have seen before there are earthly ones too. In Ephesians i. we read that God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places." And in chapter vi., we are told that our conflict is with "wicked spirits in high (or heavenly) places."

In Ephesians it is a much deeper truth than the one

we have to do with to-night. There it is the full blessing of the saints in its highest expression. It is blessing springing from the perfect revelation of God, and the complete unfolding of His heart; blessing in which we are already set. The character of the conflict springs from the character of the blessing. If in spirit we already sit in the heavenly places in Christ, we wrestle with wicked spirits there. We know that Satan has his seat, and exercises his power—not of course in the immediate presence of God, but in the heavenly places. He is there as the accuser of the brethren. It will be a subject of rejoicing to the saints above by-and-by, as we read in Revelation xii., that the accuser of the brethren is cast out of heaven: "Woe," it is said, "to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Revelation xii. 12.

Who, then, are the saints of the high or heavenly places, who are spoken of here in Daniel? Those who through grace have recognized the claims of heaven while confusion reigns here below. The Old Testament saints are such. The church to whose blessing we have just referred as it is given in Ephesians, is pre-eminently such. Christians have a calling and a hope entirely heavenly. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Even after the church has been called up to meet the Lord in the air, others are gathered out of this world whose calling is heavenly. There will be those "which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark

upon their foreheads, or in their hands, who will have part in the first resurrection." (Rev. xx. 4, 5.) When the time is come for the manifestation in this world of the truth that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. iv. 26), all these will reign. God will, as it were, possess the kingdom "in the saints." Those who have by faith anticipated that day; those who, whilst man has been exercising power in his own self-will, have "confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," will "take the kingdom."

Time presses and we must leave this interesting chapter. Let me however, in passing, call your attention to the fact that the little horn which becomes possessed, as we have seen of the power of the Western empire, or fourth beast, blasphemes the Most High, and persecutes the saints (as Rome, political or religious, has ever done). The Jewish system (*not* the saints) is given into his hands for three years and a half, a point we shall better consider when we find the same period of time in Revelation. Thus the patience of God lingers; but at length "the thrones were set." Judgment long deferred is executed by the Ancient of days, and the kingdom is given to "the Son of man," who comes "with the clouds of heaven." The One "whom they pierced," and whom "every eye shall see," will unite in His glorious person these two characters. The heavenly saints, too, "for ever with the Lord," will possess with Him the kingdom, "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Sad end of power in "this present evil world!" Bright and glorious future of those who are "delivered from this

present evil world," and who have the amazing privilege of sharing Christ's rejection by it!

May these unspeakably solemn truths have the effect upon our souls which God assuredly intends they should have! He has told us what will be the end of the world from which He has delivered us, that we may the more walk in holy separation from all its principles and all its ways. We are called to communion with God upon the mountain far away (in our souls and our ways) from the wicked scene upon which the fire of God's judgment is about to fall. We know already as taught of God the secret of that judgment. But the walk of a pilgrim with God on the plains of Mamre, and the communion of "the friend of God," with Him on the mountain, have their peaceful, heavenly attractions for the new man. These holy, happy places attract the heart, and in their peace we learn God's counsels as to the world to which we once belonged, but from which, grace and the cross of Christ have delivered us. May the well-watered plains have *no* charms for our hearts! and may the secret of their speedy judgment only deepen and widen our separation from them!

But let us turn to chapter ix. of this same book and see the last days of the times of the Gentiles in Judea. Verse 25: "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and have nothing (margin). And the people of the

prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading [literally 'wing,' constantly used for *protection,*] of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

We have here, beloved brethren, in the one week separated from the rest, the last period of the history of Jerusalem and the Jews before the Lord comes. The seventy weeks have exclusive reference to Israel and Jerusalem, "Thy (Daniel's) people and upon thy holy city." You will remark that the prophet had been confessing the sins of his people Israel. This shews his fitness morally to receive the precious communications God had for him. These related to the people whose sins he had confessed—Daniel's people. Till the end of these seventy weeks the deliverance of this people, spiritually and nationally, would not be accomplished, see verse 24. These seventy weeks are divided into three periods. The first break is after the seven weeks in which Jerusalem was being built. From the time when Nehemiah (Neh. ii.) was permitted to rebuild the city until it was completed, was seven prophetic weeks or forty-nine years. After that time there were sixty-two weeks before the cutting off of Messiah. Then there is a second break; the last week is separated from the rest. We shall soon see why.

But what are we to understand by Messiah being cut off and having nothing? Simply, that instead of receiving the kingdom, instead of receiving His rights as Messiah, He "has nothing," but, on the contrary, is cut off. "Who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living." (Isaiah liii. 8.) Last week we quoted Psalm cii., in which the Messiah pleads with God as the one who is cut off and receives nothing, "for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." In His perfection He receives all from the hand of God, whether His being raised up as Messiah or His being cast down. The obedient, dependent man refers all to God although, alas, it was Israel that "*would not*" be gathered beneath His sheltering wing. Time, in God's reckoning, is interrupted. The last week is torn from the rest; Israel is rejected; the city and sanctuary are trodden down, "and the end thereof shall be with a *flood*, and until the end of the war, desolations are determined."

Time is no more counted until the people are back in their land and their city is rebuilt; all is left indefinite—desolations until the end. "After the threescore and two years shall Messiah be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city." Here, undoubtedly, we have the destruction of Jerusalem, but not in the seventy weeks. The sixty-ninth week terminated by Messiah's being cut off. The seventieth is not yet come. It is perfectly clear that this break *does* take place—the moral import of it is of great consequence. Israel was restored that "the desire of all nations might come;" the temple

was built that "the Lord might come to it." He *did* come and was cast out and slain. Time remains unreckoned whilst "*your* house is left unto you desolate," whilst "the holy city," no longer owned of God, is trodden down, and whilst God accomplishes a work outside the order of earthly events—the gathering of the church.

That the destruction of Jerusalem does not occur in the course of the seventy weeks is evident. It was long after Christ's death that the Roman people destroyed the city. Had the seventy weeks gone on after Christ's death, this event would have been long after their termination. But no, the week is not yet come, and cannot come until Israel is in the land and the city and temple are built. The Romans are "the *people* of the prince that shall come." The prince is not yet come, but the people of that future prince—the Roman people—came and destroyed the city and the sanctuary. They left Jerusalem a desolation; and until the end that desolation continues. According to the gospel of Luke "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Then, and not till then, these desolations will cease. The last or seventieth week and the times of the Gentiles will terminate together by the Lord's appearing, when He will take the kingdom and establish Jerusalem "the joy of the whole earth."

We must, however, consider a little more fully this last week. It is the great crisis of Israel's history. The latter part, at least, is the period of their unexampled trouble. Its end is the period of their complete and everlasting deliverance. It is the crisis too of Gentile

power. This will be found, led by Satan, in open revolt against God. And, lastly, in it we find the awful days of Antichrist, whom we have already seen at the head of apostate christianity. The Lord give us much simplicity of soul in considering His word, much subjection of heart to that word, and a single eye that looks to Him alone and is filled with His light!

The prince, then, of the very nation that formerly destroyed Jerusalem shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week. From the margin, you will learn, there is no definite article before "covenant." It is *a* covenant which the Roman power makes with "the many" in Israel. The definite article is found, I believe, before the word "many," giving it the meaning of the *mass*. This covenant is confirmed with the great bulk of Israel —the remnant which, we have before seen, alone are outside it. The Antichrist, who will be king in the land of Israel, will probably be the medium of this covenant. Rev. xiii. shews us the closeness of the relations between the Roman Empire, the first beast of that chapter, and the Antichrist who is the second beast.

This covenant, it would seem, is referred to in Isaiah xxviii., and God's gracious provision for faith in view of it. In verse 15—"Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, under falsehood have we hid ourselves." To secure themselves against "the overflowing scourge," that is the Assyrian, the mass of Israel will shelter themselves beneath the Roman power whose representative, the

Antichrist, will be owned king in Judea. The "king of the north," who will come against him just before "the indignation be accomplished," is, without any doubt, the Assyrian of that day. If, in dependence on the Lord and with confidence in Him to lead you by the Spirit into all truth, you will compare with the chapter from which I have just read, the following scriptures, you will, I doubt not, be convinced of what I now advance. See Daniel xi. 40–45 ; Isaiah x. 5, 12, 24, 25 ; xiv. 25 ; xxx. 27–33. You will find that the king of the north, represented and typified of old by "the Assyrian" (Sennacherib, &c.) and later by the Syrian kings of the Greek Empire, is identical with "the Assyrian" of prophecy. His territory will be in what we call Turkey in Asia, north of Palestine. His power and resources will be considerable. He will either be himself a great maritime power, or he will command the fleet of some powerful nation in league with him. See Daniel xi. 40.

I am not prophesying, my friends, but seeking to bring out what scripture teaches. And it teaches us nothing in vain! We need all our God has given us. At this moment all eyes are turned to the East. We may be now on the eve of a great war which will probably materially affect the very regions of which we speak. What quietness it gives to see in the word of God the end of it all! How far God may be pleased to let matters go at the present time, I cannot tell, and I do not inquire. But the ultimate result of all these changes is laid before us here, and we may hear in peace all the strife of tongues—all "the wars and rumours of

wars" that may well terrify those whose *home* is in this sad world.

But to return. Will the covenant avail the body of Israel with whom it has been confirmed? We shall soon see. Meanwhile, what is the refuge of faith in that dark day? What has God prepared for the believing remnant who have not sought "the refuge of lies," which a covenant with the beast presents? Listen! "*Therefore*, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it."

Thank God, for as many here as have found in that blessed Saviour before the day we are now considering, a sure foundation! What fulness dwells in Christ! What all-availing efficacy in the work of the cross! Christ has already been laid in Zion "for a foundation" and we who now through grace have believed in Him, are safely built upon Him for eternity.

> "Blest Name! the rock on which I build,
> My shield and hiding-place;
> My never-failing treasury, filled
> With boundless stores of grace."

Yes, we have found in Him a sure foundation before a righteous God, and a refuge against every storm of judg-

ment or woe. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be confounded." We have found more; "A chief corner stone, elect, precious." This He is to God. Who but He can know *how* precious that elect One is! "*Mine* elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" Ah, yes, what priceless value He has for God! "Unto you therefore, which believe he is precious;" or "He has this price!" Taught of God we have found Him infinitely, eternally precious! By the Holy Ghost we have a divine appreciation of His preciousness. What a refuge if we think of judgment, or the power of the enemy! What rest for the conscience in His finished work! What rest for the heart in His satisfying Person!

"I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have heard the voice of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied."

But Christ will be a hiding-place and a sure foundation for the remnant in that day, when the great ones in Israel shall have made a vain and wicked covenant with the powers of darkness, to which both emperor and king will owe their crowns. But out of that safe hiding-place, apart from that sure foundation, all will be confusion, shame, and destruction. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Solemn words! *Any* refuge but Christ is a refuge of lies; the hail of judgment shall sweep it away! *Any* foundation but Christ is shifting sand; "the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Ponder these figures of deepest solemnity. It is not when exposed to the storm that the soul is swept away, but when it has

found a "refuge." Refuge and refuged soul swept away by the hail of judgment! Think of a soul that has hidden itself, as it fancies, from all danger, when the waters—deep, dark waters of judgment—sweep resistlessly over "the hiding-place." Helpless, hopeless ruin!

My hearers, these are not figures for that day only! The doom of a soul who now hears the message of God's pure and perfect grace through a crucified and glorified Saviour, and yet seeks a refuge, as thousands, alas! do, in something that is not *Christ*, is but too truly depicted in these solemn, awful words. Oh, if any of you are not hidden there, if you are not built upon Him, flee, I entreat you, flee to Him now! He is exalted "a prince and a Saviour to *give* repentance and remission of sins." Hasten to His open arms—as you are, covered with defilement; where you sit, without a good work to present, or a right feeling to plead! Now, yes, *now*, come to the Saviour!

For Israel in league with the beast, the covenant is disannulled, and the agreement does not stand. The Assyrian as an overflowing scourge passes through, and Israel is trodden down. This we find not only here in Isaiah, but in Daniel xi. at the end.

But the Assyrian is not the only danger nor even the chief one. The Roman emperor, with whom the mass of Israel will be in accord, will prove once more that "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." It is evident he will be represented in Judea by the false prophet who works miracles before him; but it is the Roman prince who is said to cause the sacrifice and the

oblation to cease in the middle of the week. We have seen the same prince spoken of as the little horn governing the beast. (Chap. vii.) Into his hand the Jewish times and laws are given, "until a time and times, and the dividing of time." Evidently the same period as the half-week here, the three-and-a-half years of unparalleled suffering for Israel, the 1,260 days of Revelation xii. Time of terrible trial for the faithful who pass through it. Fearful time for apostate Israel who have sacrificed *all* for the protection of the beast, only to be remorselessly oppressed by him and utterly ruined with him. He takes away their national worship, but he does worse! "And for the protection of abominations he shall make it desolate," or "(there shall be) a desolator."

The word abomination means idol, as all readers of the Bible are aware; for example, "the abomination of the Ammonites." Idolatry is introduced; the abomination of desolation is set in the holy place. The result of this is that "a desolator" comes, the overflowing scourge, that is, the Assyrian, or the king of the north. Alas, for Israel! Within is the Antichrist leading them to idolatry and *forcing* his own worship and that of the image of the beast upon them. Outside, the overflowing scourge—the furious Assyrian. And this goes on until, but only "*until* the consummation, and that determined be poured upon the desolate;" that is Jerusalem.

Little do the beast and "the false prophet (Antichrist) who works miracles before him," little do they know that they are but the instruments of the last judicial chastening of that rebellious people and that guilty city! Little does the king of the north, the overflowing scourge, know

that Jehovah has said of him long ago "O, Assyrian, the rod of *mine* anger, and the staff in their hand is *mine* indignation . . . . Wherefore, it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, I will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks." (Isa. x. 5–12.) But so it is; these wicked kings, with all their godless ambition, with all their cruel oppression of the people beloved for the fathers' sake, can but serve the purpose of God in His indignation!

Beyond this neither the malice nor the subtilty of the enemy can possibly go. Let Jehovah once say of Jerusalem, "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins!" Ah, then the Assyrian "shall come to his end, and none shall help him;" the king shall be cast into the Tophet prepared for him; the beast, too, shall be "cast alive into the lake of fire!" Then indeed, but not till then, "in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." (Joel ii. 32.) Compare, at your leisure, the words "until the consummation and that determined" with Isaiah x. 23–26 and following verses to the end of chapter xii., and you will find that the period, we are considering, ends in the complete deliverance of Israel, the destruction of their enemies, and the reign of Messiah.

We have seen, then, the beast, or the Roman Empire, and shall find it again in Revelation, God willing. But we must consider a little further the Antichrist, and the king of the north, or Assyrian. In the end of chapter xi. and in the last chapter of this prophecy we learn other

particulars of the Antichrist whom we saw in his relations to Christendom, in 2 Thessalonians ii. a few evenings ago. We find him here as the king in the land. You will notice that the features in verse 36 answer exactly to those we have already seen in "the man of sin." "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done."

"The king" is here brought before us in a remarkably sudden and unexpected way. But who he is, the Spirit of God has made very plain. Before, however, comparing what is here said of him with the testimony of the New Testament, let us look at other notices of him in the Old Testament. We might have gathered from the way "the king" is introduced here, that we should find him elsewhere in the prophecies as to the last days. And so we do.

In Isaiah lvii. we find "the righteous taken away from the evil to come." If you read the context, no doubt will remain upon your minds that the reference here is to the last awful days of Israel's sin and God's judgment of it. Alas, what a catalogue of the pollutions and sins of that day! Among them all, the most abominable before God is the unholy alliance with the Antichrist. "And thou wentest *to the king* with ointment . . . . and didst debase thyself even to hell." Verse 9. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity!" When the Son of God came in His Father's name to gather her children beneath His wings

of tenderest love, of surest faithfulness, of eternal security, she cried "Away with him, crucify him!" When Antichrist shall come in his own name she will go to him with perfumes. She will burn her idolatrous incense before "the king!"

The representative of the Roman power once appealed to her national pride, "Shall I crucify your king?" One base, humiliating, infidel cry from priest and people, "We have no king but Cæsar!" But if they have done these things "in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry!" Ah there, alas! the faithless daughter of Zion will be found with ointment and incense before "the king" in league with the "Cæsar" of that sad and fatal day! But it is only to debase herself "even to hell." *The many* of that guilty nation shall perish in the judgment of "the king" whom they will have honoured in the place of God and in the place of their Messiah. For Tophet is prepared for "the king." But he will not perish alone. He will drag down the great part of the nation with whom the covenant was confirmed, to that place of judgment which "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone doth kindle."

Refer with me to the solemn passage where these words occur (Isa. xxx. 33), and where we shall find "the king" spoken of again and in exactly the same company as in our chapter in Daniel. "For Tophet is ordained of old, for the king also it is prepared."* The

* This is, I believe, the true rendering. It is so given in the French of Martin (edition adopted in Cohn's Hexaglot Bible), the German of Luther, and in the Elberfeld Translation.

prophet is speaking of the Assyrian who is "the king of the north," and the next verse speaks of Egypt, or, "the king of the south." Tophet is ordained for the overflowing scourge—as we have seen the king of the north will be—"which smote with a rod." But not for him alone! It is prepared for "the king" who has come in his own name and been received by Christ-rejecting and apostate Israel. We have seen him already as the anti-prophet (Rev. xix.) "cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone." We have seen him as anti-priest of apostatized Christendom (2 Thess. ii. 8) consumed with the breath of the Lord's mouth. Here in Isaiah we see Tophet prepared for him as the anti-king; "he hath made it wide and deep . . . . the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." The same wicked person! The same awful but righteous judgment! He has usurped wickedly and blasphemously every office of Christ; Prophet, Priest, and King! He is taken by Christ in person as He comes to make good in judgment His every beneficent claim; "the spirit of his mouth," "the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone" and "the lake of fire, burning with brimstone," consume this lawless and blasphemous ANTICHRIST.

That "the king" is the same person we have seen in 2 Thessalonians ii. admits of no doubt when we compare the description which the Spirit of God gives of him by Paul, with that which He gives by Daniel (chap. xi. 36–38) and consider them in the light of other scriptures. "That wicked" or *lawless* one answers exactly to the one who "shall do according to his will." To do

one's own will is the very essence of sin, and this reaches its sad perfection in "the man of sin." Self-will is the principle of lawlessness. But more, "he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods." Again, "neither shall he regard the God of his fathers." He is evidently a Jew. "Nor the desire of women"—Jewish women desired to be the mother of Messiah; hence this wicked king regards neither the God of Israel nor Christ, "for he shall magnify himself above all." This is surely the one "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. ii. 4.) The moral lessons, solemnly important as they are, have been before us, and may be again. God grant we may learn them in His presence!

But how long does this last? "Until the consummation and that determined" of which we read in chapter ix. Here the term is thus given: "and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." The blasphemous pretensions of Antichrist cannot outlive the period, three years and a half, during which the Western Emperor (no doubt by means of this very king, who represents him in Palestine) "makes the sacrifice and oblation to cease." Chapters ix. 27; vii. 25.

But with all his pretensions, with his claim to be God, this king who honours neither the true God nor the gods of the nations, will yet establish an idolatry of his own. (See ver. 38.) In Revelation xiii. we find that

he claims worship for the image of the beast; here he honours "the God of forces;" things probably closely connected if not identical. In chapter ix. there was "a desolator" "because of the protection of abominations (idols)." Here again there is precisely the same thing shewing, I think, that the emperor of the West acts by "the king" in the land. "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south [Egypt] push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind." This is the "overflowing scourge" (Isa. xxviii. 18), the "desolator" (Dan. ix. 17), the "Assyrian," we were considering a few minutes ago; and who will be an important power, having "chariots, and horsemen, and many ships," in the territory to the north of the Holy Land.

These few verses give the history of this king of the north "at the time of the end." Take particular notice of this expression, because earlier in the chapter, the Spirit of God has given much that relates to other "kings of the north," and notably to Antiochus Epiphanes. What this wicked king did in his day was a foreshadowing of worse things on the part of "the king of the north," of a darker and more terrible day, fast approaching. But there can be no confusion, for the Spirit expressly declares that what we have in the latter part of the chapter relates to "*the time of the end.*"

Most interesting and most profitable are the details here given, but time forbids our entering upon them. You will remark that "the glorious land" is God's centre in the earth. God reckons all according to that

land, as we reckon longitude east or west from Greenwich. The kings of the north and of the south draw their designations from their geographical position in reference to the Holy Land. "The glorious, holy mountain" takes its name from God's purposes about it. He will make that mountain what He is pleased to call it. Then Israel will sing with a thankful heart, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion." But before that day the Assyrian who shall "plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas [Mediterranean and Dead Sea], in the glorious, holy mountain," "shall come to his end and *none shall help him.*"

Terrible end; "*I* will break the Assyrian in *my* land, and upon *my* mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them." (Isa. xiv. 25.) The end of "the king," more awful still, is not given here. We have seen it already, he is consumed by the spirit of the Lord's mouth, he is cast alive into the lake of fire. But the beast (imperial Rome), the king or false prophet (Antichrist), and the king of the north (the Assyrian) have all reached the term of their power. They do not perish at the same moment, but it is at the same great crisis; when "the indignation is accomplished." This is a familiar expression to those who have learned from scripture the future of Israel.

In the portion already referred to (Isa. x. 24, 25), we read, "O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a little while, and the *indignation shall*

cease, and mine anger in their destruction." "Beast," "king," and "Assyrian" are but so many instruments for pouring God's indignation and anger upon Israel. But He has "determined" (ver. 23) a period to the "indignation" and this "shall cease in their destruction." That this destruction is complete and eternal, is shewn by the rest of the chapter, and by the following one in which Israel is entirely delivered and blessed beneath the sway of the true "King." Nor delivered only, they "draw water out of the wells of salvation." They "sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth."

If we look now at Daniel xii. in connection with Matthew xxiv. we shall find much light upon the last half week of Daniel which terminates, together with the times of the Gentiles, in the full deliverance and final blessing of Israel.

"And at that time"—at the time when "the rod of mine anger" perishes in Jehovah's land and upon His mountain (see Is. x. 12–24; Is. xiv. 25); at the time when the king of the north "comes to his end, and none shall help him;"—"at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Here we have not only a matter of deepest interest: "*thy* people shall be delivered;" but we have that which determines with certainty the period of which the Spirit speaks. For what people is in question here? Daniel's people, that is

Israel. There is no possibility of escaping the plain truth here intended to be conveyed. Daniel had confessed the sins, not of Christians, but of the people of Israel. This confession drew forth these precious communications about the people whose sins he had confessed. Alas! as we saw last week, two parts of this people perish in the land, and the third part is brought through the fire. (Zech. xiii. 8, 9.) It is this third part, refined as silver is refined and tried as gold is tried, which shall form the people to be delivered. "Thy people shall be delivered, *every one that shall be found written in the book.*" Had it referred to spiritual deliverance of Christians, there would have been no need for this clause.

Again, it is the time of trouble for the same people which is delivered. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. xxx. 7.) At this time of trouble, such as never was before and never shall be again, Daniel's people "shall be delivered;" "he shall be saved out of it." I need not ask you whether any event, that has already taken place, has been the occasion of the deliverance of Daniel's people. It has been imagined that at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the abomination of desolation was put in the holy place. Was Daniel's people delivered one thousand two hundred and ninety days after that event? I have only to ask the question. Delivered! Read, if you have the heart to do it, the history of that awful siege and of the taking of that guilty and unhappy city, and say, if "Daniel's people were delivered" if "Jacob was saved out of it!"

Now, in these two chapters (Dan. xii. and Matt. xxiv.)

there is a time of trouble of unexampled severity spoken of. It must be the same, for it is, of course, impossible that there should be two times of trouble, each more severe than any before or after. We find in both accounts "the abomination that maketh desolate" set up in the holy place. In Daniel we are told that Israel shall be delivered and a blessing is pronounced upon the one who reaches the end of the brief period named, after the idol is placed in the sanctuary. The deliverance will then be complete and final. In Matthew we are told that, "immediately after the tribulation of these days, there shall appear the sign, the Son of man in heaven." Assuredly we need no more to identify the end of this half-week with the appearing of Christ for the deliverance of His people, as we saw it last week.

The details of these deeply interesting chapters must be left for your private study. They will, assuredly, well repay it. There are, however, a few difficulties which sincere enquirers after truth have found in Matthew xxiv. which must be briefly noticed.

And, first, one or two general remarks will clear the way and make it less necessary to go into many details. When this memorable discourse was uttered, the Lord had just left the temple with the sad words on His lips "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Terrible words were these from such lips! "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Words of solemn import, but words through which shines the hope of a brighter day. The blessed One who would fain have gathered Israel has not left for ever that rebellious nation, beloved, how-

ever, for the fathers' sake. "Until" recalls the words of divinest grace, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Blessed Lord! if the tears poured from Thy gracious eyes because they "would not" be gathered, what shall be Thy joy when "the present is brought" to Thee "of a people scattered and peeled," but a "willing people" to nestle beneath Thy sheltering wings!

Thereupon the disciples "came for to shew him the buildings of the temple," and He foretells their utter destruction. Afterwards, on the Mount of Olives, the disciples ask Him privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?" You will remark that their question embraces much besides the destruction of the temple. They ask about the Lord's coming and the end of the age, that is, the end of the period during which Israel is under the old covenant. The age that is to succeed is that of Messiah and of "the new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

In the Lord's answer we find He says nothing of direct reference to the destruction of Jerusalem; although what He does say had, doubtless, a *partial* accomplishment then, and might be used of God to guide the believers who were found in Judea at that time. It is in Luke we find the direct and explicit instructions which the Lord gave to guide the faithful of that day. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains," &c.

(Luke xxi. 20, 21.) This has distinct and direct reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. But, mark, not one word about this being the time of unequalled tribulation. He merely says, "For these be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Not a word about the abomination of desolation. And, lastly, the Lord closes this part of His discourse and separates it from that which refers to "the end," by saying, "and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." These times will be fast approaching their end when the holy place receives the abomination of desolation. They will have run their sad course when the Lord comes in the clouds of heaven, when His feet stand upon the Mount of Olives.

Here, in Matthew, He speaks of the testimony of His disciples in general terms down to verse 14. He then speaks definitely of the time immediately preceding His coming in the clouds of heaven. To understand this teaching with any measure of clearness, we must bear in mind that there is an undefined interval between the sixty-ninth week of Daniel and the seventieth. The Jews were dispersed because of their rejection of Christ. "And he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." (Matt. xxii. 7.) True there was long patience. Year after year passed; "the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger." Besides, the Lord Jesus had wept over the rebellious city. He had made intercession for the transgressors. Who shall say how much they owed to the tears they never saw, and the prayer they scarce heard?

Whilst God thus lingered in grace the Jews had a place upon earth—a place forfeited and doomed, but still it existed. But when Jerusalem is destroyed, and Israel no longer exists as a nation, the undefined period of the treading down of the city and the dispersion of the people begins. Time will not be reckoned until they are again in their land and the city rebuilt; the last week must then run its course. The first half is characterized by God's testimony on the one hand, and the covenant between the Roman prince and the mass of Israel on the other. The second half begins by this prince causing the temple worship to cease, and is characteristically the time of the great tribulation.

It is of this period that the Lord here speaks. (Vers. 15–28.) "Immediately" after this, He tells of His appearing in glory. He is then, we have already seen from other scriptures, accompanied by the heavenly saints. But there are saints upon the earth who pass through the tribulation, "the elect," for whose sake the days are shortened. These are gathered by His angels, the instruments of His providence. Terrible but discriminating judgment is executed. Of two at the mill, or in the field, one is swept away by it, the other is left for blessing beneath Messiah's sway.

If these general observations are weighed and tested by scripture, most of the difficulties of this chapter will have disappeared. But there are two so often presented that I will just notice them. The first difficulty is one which arises from a foregone conclusion for which scripture gives no warrant. It is drawn from verse 28, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be

gathered together." If a person without duly considering the chapter or studying it in the light of other scriptures makes up his mind that it is all about the Romans destroying Jerusalem, it is very natural for him to take advantage of their standard bearing an eagle. But for one who seriously studies scripture, for one who approaches this chapter not to uphold a theory, but to learn what the Lord would teach, there can be but little difficulty in finding the true moral import of the figure the Lord uses. No doubt the Romans, and many other nations, ancient and modern, have carried the eagle upon their standards. But what is there here to shew that any of these nations are intended, or that Rome in particular is indicated? What is there in the way the figure is introduced to warrant such an application? Nothing. But the difficulties of such an application are insuperable. What are we to understand by "*wheresoever* the carcase is?" or what is the meaning of "one shall be taken and another left?" Did Titus find two at the mill, and take one and leave one?

But let scripture explain itself and all will be simple. Take for instance, Job xxxix. 30, "Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she." Many other portions might be quoted which explain the figure here used. But indeed it is very simple. Wherever the object of judgment is, there will judgments, swift, relentless, all-searching, be found.

The second difficulty I would notice is, that the Lord says, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." By some this has been held to prove that the whole prophecy was fulfilled at the time of the

destruction of Jerusalem. We must as before decide by scripture what the Lord means by the word, "generation." But let us see how much the interpretation I have named involves. For you will notice it is *after* "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." Has this taken place? In Luke, where the distinction is made between the past and the future, where the treading down of Jerusalem till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, separates that which happened in the time of Titus, from that which will take place when the Lord comes; even in Luke these same words occur *after* the coming of Christ, and the "redemption" of the remnant in Israel.

Moreover, it has been shewn that the Lord speaks of the same time as Daniel does in chapter xii. This time is expressly said to be when "thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Those who shall have received the mark of the beast are not in the book, but the "third part" brought through the fire shall have their names there. Lastly, one thousand, three hundred, and thirty-five days, from the "time that the daily sacrifice (compare Dan. ix. 27) shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up," there will be complete blessing for Israel. Then it is indeed certain that the events are all future!

But how often the Lord uses the word "generation" in a moral sense and not to indicate a period of time! Indeed, throughout scripture, we find this to be the case. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." (Matt. xii. 39.) The Lord was surrounded by a

corrupt and Christ-rejecting race. Moses had spoken of the same race in an earlier part of their history as "a perverse and crooked generation." (Deut. xxxii. 5.) David says, "Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." This strikingly illustrates the moral use of the word; for "this generation" lasts long enough for the Psalmist to say, "Thou shalt preserve them from it *for ever*." Again, more than one Psalm speaks of "the generation to come" in a sense evidently moral. The "generation to come" is the Israel of the new covenant, when God will have taken away the stony heart and given them a heart of flesh.

Not only then would the old generation of Christ-rejecters and sign-seekers, the generation of vipers which He left, be found when Jerusalem was compassed with armies; it will be found when He comes again in power and glory.

We have traced the times of the Gentiles to their end, as it is given in Daniel. The stone strikes the image in the feet—Rome. The fourth beast, Rome, is judged before the Ancient of days. His representative in Israel "the king" too (alas, that we should be forced to call him king when Israel's true king came to her, "meek and lowly," and would fain have "gathered her children!"), the false, the *Anti*-king has been before us and we have seen his destruction in Tophet, which the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, kindles.

Let us now rapidly glance at the testimony of the book of Revelation as to these two wicked men. In Revelation xiii. and xvii., a beast is brought before us, which is evidently the Roman Empire, in its last form.

In Revelation xiii. we read, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy." The leading features here identify this beast with the fourth beast of Daniel. Here, there is no mention of other beasts, for they had disappeared. Moreover, it is this one above all with which the Spirit of God is occupied, because in it Satan leads Gentile power into open revolt against God, and it is upon it that judgment is executed.

There are several things of solemn importance, here said of this beast, which we have not yet seen. The most momentous is that which we find in the latter part of verse 2, "and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." This is never said of the Roman Empire in its first form, although the Lord Jesus Christ suffered under it, and although it put to death thousands of His saints. However cruel it was, however wicked were its rulers, it is never said that Satan gave the power to the empire then ruling the world. On the contrary, Christians are told in Romans xiii. that the powers that be are all ordained of God. It was from God that the Roman empire received the power it wielded in its first state, that which existed when the New Testament was written. It inherited providentially the supreme authority, committed by God directly to Nebuchadnezzar. In its future form it will owe its greatness and its authority to Satan.

In the preceding chapter (xii.) we read of war in heaven, "and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth

the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Ver. 9.) This occasions joy in heaven. The "kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ" is celebrated in joyous anticipation. The first step was taken towards the binding of Satan and the bringing in of the kingdom; "for the accuser of our brethren is cast out."

Satan, who has now his seat in the heavenlies and is the prince of the power of the air, will lose for ever his place there at a moment appointed by God. Verse 14 shews it will be three years and a half before Israel's deliverance. This adds an important element to the instructions we have already received as to "the time of Jacob's trouble." The prince who shall take away the sacrifice and oblation, and who shall change Jewish times and laws, will be under the power and direction of the dragon. The time of unexampled trouble will correspond exactly to the woe here pronounced: "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." No wonder the tribulation is unexampled!

Thank God, my brethren, that we shall then be with Christ! Some have spoken as if it would be a privilege to pass through the tribulation. Privilege! I can understand that it is a privilege, and a blessed one, to "know the fellewship of Christ's sufferings." I can see nothing but *woe* in suffering under the hand of God for sin, with the power of Satan let loose upon a Christ-rejecting world. I see nothing to desire in that! God be praised that these sufferings we shall never prove.

Meanwhile, we have an opportunity of shewing the value Christ has for our soul by treading faithfully, humbly and at all costs the path of His rejection. Ah, but it is a path flesh can never tread! It needs daily grace and the power of an ungrieved Spirit.

Satan, however, has but a short time. Three years and a half is not much in the annals of his sad and miserable power. He will make the best of the little time he has! If he could devour Israel he would; but that is forbidden him (vers. 13, 16), so he makes war with her seed!

But can he lead Gentile power in its last form—can he lead the kingdoms of Christendom into open revolt against God? This in his hatred of God and in his malice against man he attempts and but too well succeeds. "And the dragon gave him his power and his seat and great authority." Then the great Gentile power will be in open revolt against heaven, a power no longer of God, but *of Satan*.

That the Roman empire will exist again and with this striking and frightful difference will become very clear to you in comparing with the portion we are considering, chapter xvii. of this book. The "seven heads and ten horns" serve to shew that the beast of chapter xvii. is the same as the one we are looking at. In verse 8 we read, "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was and is not, and shall be present," for so it

should be read. Here we have, as distinctly as can be put, the fact that there was a time when the Roman empire existed, a time of non-existence, and a time of existence anew. In this third condition, the *re-existent* state—if I may use the word—it will come out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition. This is a truth of awful solemnity! The kingdoms of Europe that formerly belonged to the Roman Empire will be again united as kingdoms under an Imperial head, but *it will be by Satanic power* and its end will be "*perdition.*"

In verse 12 we read, "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." We saw that there were ten toes in the image of Daniel. That these ten toes represented kings, or kingdoms, we gathered from the words, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." They formed, however, a part of the one image, that is, there was imperial unity. It was in these toes that the image was struck by the stone. Now here we have the same thing under another figure. Instead of ten toes in the image we have ten horns upon the beast. This we have seen also in Daniel vii., where the prophet is told that the ten horns are ten kings. The Spirit of God tells us once more that these ten horns are ten kings, and adds "which have received no kingdom as yet." They will receive power as kings *one hour* with the beast. That is to say, during *the same period of time* as there is a united empire, there will be ten kingdoms. This will be an entirely new thing, as indeed it was remarked before, this evening. Here it is so clearly brought out that I

call your attention to it again. There has been a Roman empire. It had its day, and was broken up. Various kingdoms were formed, but the empire ceased to exist. By-and-by this empire will be resuscitated. Its form will be different, for with an emperor there will be ten vassal kings. This is perfectly clear from the verse just read. It accords entirely with the figure of toes in the image, and with the vision of Daniel vii. We have already seen that it is in this condition that the stone strikes that part of the image which represents Rome, but it destroys the whole image. The judgment before the Ancient of days tells the same tale in language too clear to require any further comment. We must now see its end as presented in this chapter before returning to chapter xiii., where we have yet other features in this beast of sad interest.

"These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Not only, then, beloved friends, does the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, strike the image in its ten toes, but the saints are associated with Christ in the exercise of this judgment. For we read here that they who are with Him are "called, and chosen, and faithful." None but saints are ever designated in scripture by these titles. It is true that the unfallen angels are called elect angels, and therefore the word chosen might apply to them; but they are never said to be called. The called ones are, evidently, redeemed ones; they are saints. Those who in chapter v. sang the song of

redemption in heaven are the "called, and chosen, and faithful," who are here found with the Lord when the beast and kings make war against Him, and when He overcomes them. Mark the titles which the Lord here takes, as we shall find them again in chapter xix., where, thank God, we shall find once more the called, and chosen, and faithful in the train of the glorious and victorious Rider.

But is this indeed the end of the "most christian" nations of Europe? Will kingdoms which now profess the name of Christ give their power to the beast, and with him be led by Satan into open war with the Lamb? Will all the boasted improvements and progress of the day in which we live end thus? As surely as the living God knows the end from the beginning! Do I say it lightly, my brethren? God knows! I blush and grieve for the future of Christendom, for the fast approaching day of Satan's power in the land through which we pass strangers and pilgrims to our heavenly home. The Lord deliver His people *practically* from this present evil world!

The world cast out Christ, it now professes His name. But is it changed? Outwardly, yes; essentially, no! Does it really own Christ? Does it love Him? Did it bow to Him? Does it rejoice to suffer shame for His name? The world indeed! "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, *is not of the Father*, but is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Was the world changed when it took upon itself the

profession of Christ? No doubt Christianity civilised the nations of Europe and it became *respectable*. Thank God for His providential goodness, as well as for His rich and precious grace to souls! But has national Christianity made the nations cease to *love* the world? Have the nations of Christendom written the sentence of the cross upon "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life!" Have they sought to be like the Christ in the path of His lowly grace and humiliation? Is His name "ointment poured forth" in their feasts? And their richest feast, is it the table of precious grace His hand spread in the night in which He was betrayed for those who owe all to His death? Would they gladly stop the sweetest toned instrument of music to hear the sweet tale of Calvary that *never* palls on ears taught of God to know its worth?

Do you say, my friends, that this is *too much* to ask? Too much to ask of whom? Am I not speaking of those who bear the name of Christ, of those who claim to form part of the church? And is not the church affianced to Christ? Is it not said, "His wife hath made herself ready?" Is it indeed too much to ask of a wife that she should *love* her husband? Too much to ask that the tale of his sorrows should always find in her a ready and sympathising ear! Too much to ask that she should share the fortunes of him who nourishes and cherishes her!

Is the world around us, christian in name though it be—is it affianced to a rejected Christ? Does it even wish to be? Nay, it would rather forget Him who had not where to lay His head, and make itself

happy in the scene of all His woes. Nominal Christianity answers its present end. It lulls its conscience and leaves it at liberty to seek its rest and pleasure in present things. It gives also a tone and suavity to the world which ministers to its comfort; but so little is the world changed, that a very brief space of time will suffice, for it to abandon the forms of Christianity. This it will do, as we saw a fortnight ago from 2 Thessalonians ii., when the Holy Ghost has led the heavenly bride to her Lord. But not that only. The powers that are now ordained of God in His providence will give their power to the beast, to whom Satan gave "his power, and his seat, and great authority."

We can now, with profit, turn back to look at one or two important points in the description of it which the Spirit of God gives in chapter xiii. "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast." That an empire like that of Rome should rise to great splendour and gradually decline and even become extinct has caused no surprise. It is the history of all great empires. But, that it should rise again, that it should embrace in its vast extent ten kingdoms with apparently conflicting interests, and that it should reach a greater splendour than ever it attained before, will indeed astonish the world. Tell the world that that is about to happen; tell the "christian" world that such will be the case; point them to the clear testimony of scripture here that it will be so, and they will not believe you. How will they *then* wonder after the beast!

"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power

unto the beast." Satan has so far gained his point. He is worshipped in the person of the beast by those who lately professed the name of Christ!

"And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies: and power was given to him to continue forty and two months." This recalls the little horn of Daniel vii. both in his blasphemous character and in the time he is permitted to rule. When we considered the passage in Daniel we saw that the little horn assumed such a preponderance in the empire as to control it and bring down the judgment of God upon the whole. So true is this that the Spirit of God here attributes all the blasphemy of the little horn to the beast, that is, to the future great Latin empire, without giving the history of the little horn itself which we find detailed in Daniel.

It is, however, sadly sufficient to know, as we are taught here, that the great Western empire of the last days will speak "great things and blasphemies" against the living God. It will be infidel. The principles are already at work which will culminate in this. Alas, that we should have to say it! infidelity rears its hideous head in this long so privileged country, so sadly indeed as to be to a spiritual mind an evident prelude of the day we are considering. The platform, the club, the scientific society, the schools great and small, the pulpit, alas! the family circle, where once a breath of the sad *miasm* of hell would not have been tolerated, all abound now with infidelity more or less pronounced. Ah me! that I should have to say it of the land of the Bible, long the bulwark of, at least, *orthodox* Christianity! And it is

called *progress*! True, all too true—but *towards what end*? Our chapter tells us.

The future empire will not be infidel only. It will be a blasphemer "against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven." Open revolt against God! Positive blasphemy of His name!

But what is His tabernacle which is blasphemed as well as His name? His tabernacle! Thank God, what a tale of grace! It is the glorified church. (See Rev. xxi. 2, 3.) If the devil seems to triumph, grace has won a supreme and astonishing victory displayed in heaven. Sinners redeemed from the power of Satan will have become the holy glorious habitation of God! The church will be eternally the tabernacle of God. Priceless grace! It reigns already through righteousness unto eternal life. But how grace will then have found its rest in the tabernacle of God! Surely we bow our heads in deepest worship as we contemplate the contrast! Apostate Christendom blaspheming God and His habitation, some living stones of which will only recently have disappeared from the streets of the very cities which shall resound with the praises of the beast and the worship of the dragon.

But why this wrath against the church and the heavenly saints? Because God has taken to Himself the habitation of His eternal counsels of grace and bidden the guests to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The casting down of Satan is but the natural consequence in divine counsels of the entrance of these saints into their heavenly home. God will no longer tolerate

"wicked spirits in heavenly places." (Eph. vi.) They are cast down, never more to enter there.

Hence the rage of Satan. Hence his determination to make himself worshipped upon earth now that he has lost his place in heaven. Hence his blasphemy against God "and his tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven." Woe to the inhabiters of the earth!

Pagan Rome has persecuted the saints. Christian Rome has outdone it in shedding the blood of the saints. No wonder that Satanic Rome shall "make war with the saints." For God will have His saints even in that dark, rebellious, and blasphemous day. There will be those who come "out of *the* (the article should be read here) great tribulation and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Precious blood of the Lamb! What untold virtues dwell in it! When God has, so to say, entered His habitation; when the church has reached its destined place in glory, that precious blood will still be doing its work of grace upon earth, and from among the heathen "a multitude that no man can number" shall "wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." Oh, how the heart swells as it contemplates "the unsearchable riches of Christ!"

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written, from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the slain Lamb." Thank God, I repeat, that we shall be above! And thank Him that He will have those upon earth whose names were written before the foundation of the world in the book of life. Bless God it is the book of life of the *slain Lamb!*

God's deep-laid counsels of grace, before the foundation of the world, are all made good by the Lamb that, "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who, *by him*, do believe *in God*."

Even in that dark day God will have His witnesses. There will be those who will not "worship the beast, nor his image, neither receive his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands." God knows them all, has their names in the book of life. We find from Revelation xx. 4, that they have part in the first resurrection, that is, the resurrection of life, and that they live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Contrast their blessing with the awful judgment of the mass who worship the beast. (Rev. xiv. 9, 10.) God be praised for as many as get the victory over the beast, and stand on the sea of glass with the harps of God to sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb! (Chap. xv. 2, 3.) "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Oh the precious blood of Christ which has won for these their victory, and the song of the Lamb!

But now another beast is introduced to us. (Ver. 11.) We have seen the same personage before. We have just dwelt upon the blood of the Lamb with worship and praise. This is the Anti-Lamb. In Judæa he will claim to be Christ, and usurp His place as king. Here he has two horns like a lamb, but his speech bewrayeth him; "he spake as a dragon." Another miserable instrument of Satan! Like the first beast whose prophet he is, he receives his power and inspiration from the devil.

Time presses, and I must merely connect what we find here with what we have seen elsewhere, and commend the whole chapter to your prayerful study. In 2 Thessalonians ii. we saw that his "coming is after the working of Satan." Here he speaks "as a dragon." There we heard of his "power, and signs, and lying wonders;" here "he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men," and "he had power to give life to the image of the beast." Thus this "lawless one," this Antichrist will present in a lying way the proofs which Christ presented in perfect and blessed truth (see Acts ii. 22) of a divine mission. The proof that "Jehovah is God" which Elijah gave on Mount Carmel, this wicked one will give in a lying way. In Thessalonians he comes "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." Here, he "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast."

We shall shortly see him called "the false prophet who wrought miracles before him" (the beast). Here the Spirit of God gives an account of the "miracles he had power to do in the sight of the beast." In 2 Thessalonians ii., "he sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God," exalting himself "above all that is called God." In Daniel xi. he does not "regard any God: for he shall magnify himself above all." It may seem a strange inconsistency that "in his estate shall he honour the God of forces" and that he should cause men "to worship the first beast whose deadly

wound was healed!" But after all he is man, and not God; and it is impossible for a man to be self-satisfying. If he "exalts himself above all that is called God, or worshipped," yet must he sooner or later have a God. But mark well, Satan is at the bottom of all this. This miserable two-horned beast (a great political power called also, as we have more than once seen, "the king," Dan. xi.), who claims worship, as we find from Thessalonians, is but the tool of Satan! Satan is content when Antichrist demands divine honours, for he—Satan—receives them in his person. He plunges him, however, into another blasphemous idolatry, and makes him the false prophet of the Beast (Roman empire), in which quality he claims worship for the beast and his image. Satan is still worshipped in the person of the beast. "And they worship the dragon!"

It may be difficult to unravel the intricacies of this trinity of blasphemy; it may not be easy to decipher the number of the beast. But the general teaching is neither difficult nor uncertain.

And what is the end of this trinity of blasphemous rebellion against God? Refer, if you please, to Revelation xix. 11–20. Here we find the Lord breaking in upon this rebellious scene. Recall, I beg you, the stroke by which "the stone cut out without hands" shivered the image of Gentile power, become at length insupportable. Recall, too, the judgment before the Ancient of days: "I beheld then, because of the great words which the little horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning

flame." Call to mind also the "Tophet" we have seen "prepared for the king" (who is also the "false prophet," the two-horned beast and Antichrist); "the breath of Jehovah like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." Lastly, bear in mind the judgment of "that wicked, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness (Epiphany) of his coming." And now He is coming! Read carefully and prayerfully every word at your leisure. It is the "Ancient of days," but it is also the "Word of God." It is the Lord of lords, and King of kings, of whom we read in chapter xvii. "The Lamb" He has been in grace, He ever retains that blessed title. It is the joy of heaven: "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts (living creatures), and in the midst of the elders stood *a Lamb* as it had been slain." Object of the dragon's enmity against which he leads up the whole Latin empire "to make war with the Lamb!" Is it possible? "With THE LAMB," once humbled in lowliest grace to bring salvation to guilty man! But He is *the Lamb* in the midst of the throne. All heaven bows before Him!

Now God's good time has come for Him to take to Him "His great power and reign." He *is* "Lord of lords and King of kings," and as such He comes! He has heard the great words of the little horn; He has heard the blasphemies of the beast! He has seen "the king" and the perfumes burnt before him; He has beheld him in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God. But He, the Ancient of days and the Word of God, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The sharp sword

of His mouth will vindicate His counterfeited rights; "and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

And the result? Beast and false prophet—emperor and king; "These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." The miserable and guilty instruments of Satan's malice and wrath when he is cast out of heaven, both finish their blasphemous course in the lake of fire. Awful end for two men of like passions with ourselves! But "true and righteous are his judgments!" Satan's punishment is like that of his guilty agents in the lake of fire. (Rev. xx. 10.) The *measure* of his punishment is in the hand of a righteous God.

God be praised for the grace that has united us to the heavenly man of God's deepest counsels! We shall form part of those armies which follow Him when He thus comes forth in judgment. We are "the called and chosen and faithful" who are "with Him." "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . . For of him and through him and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever, Amen."

Thus then it is that the stone cut out without hands smites the image. Next week, if the Lord will, we shall see it "become a mountain and fill the whole earth."

And now, my brethren, how far have our hearts really responded to the grace that has deigned to give us these communications about that which does not directly concern ourselves? It is an honour our God has put upon us, to which we ought thankfully to answer, in that He has treated us as His intelligent children in communicating to us His purposes for the earth as well as the future of

man's rebellion through the craft and malice of Satan. Assuredly the prophecies that have been before us have reference to events on the earth; and we, through grace, do not belong to the earth. But have they no interest for us on that account? On the contrary, beloved friends, they have the double interest of being communications our Father has seen well to make to us in His grace, and of having for their great purpose the glory of Christ. For God and for faith, Christ is the one great and supreme object and end of all. All God's ways are for His glory. As to our blessing, He Himself is our blessing. He is ours, and all that He is we have in possessing Him. Even the glory He has won in bearing our sins, He shares with us "who caused his pain."

Our God has communicated to us His children His thoughts and purposes with regard to things that do not relate to ourselves personally. But because they do not concern ourselves, save as all that concerns Christ is of importance and interest to us, can we think lightly of the goodness and grace that have made known His thoughts to us? He said to His disciples, "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. I call you friends, for whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." What a place for us that Christ deigns to call us *friends!* The communications of a man to his intimate friend do not always, do not often, relate directly to that friend. Oh, what price should His communications have who has been for us a Friend in need! Precious in themselves they must be, if they occupy *His* mind. Doubly

precious for us as expressing the grace that calls us His friends.

God said with regard to Abraham, "shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" How far was Abraham from answering, "I am not in Sodom, I have nothing to do with the judgment of Sodom!" How well he valued the gracious communication, painful though it was! How well he used the knowledge he had just acquired! The communication which God made to him was the occasion of that intercourse with Him which is one of the most remarkable and precious which the pages of inspiration record. He poured out his soul before God in holy liberty; he was in His presence as one so blessed that he had nothing to ask for himself, but could take the place of intercession for others. May we learn in the presence of God the lessons He would teach us by what has been before us this evening! May we be detached from this present evil world! May we be *in it* only as sent of Christ, as He was sent of the Father! May our hearts be so touched by divine grace as to be intercessors with God and a testimony for Him in a scene the judgment of which we shall behold from above!

For assuredly we shall be in heaven with Christ before one single event which we have seen takes place. Before "the beast" in its last form appears upon this earth; before the man of sin or false prophet is revealed, we shall be with Christ above. Our entrance above will be a signal, as it were, for the casting out of Satan, an event which will not be long delayed. So that we shall be with Christ in the Father's house before the dragon

gives power to the beast, or speaks in the voice of the false prophet. Then when the stone cut out of the mountain smites the image in its feet, we shall be in the train of that blessed One. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" When the "Faithful and True doth judge and make war," we, whom He speaks of as "called, and chosen, and faithful," shall come with Him.

God forbid that we should ever be looking around us for events upon earth. Our satisfying portion now is Himself; our hope is Himself. That which the Lord sets before us for our own hearts, is His own personal coming to receive us. May He more and more direct our hearts to that blessed hope! He has put nothing between it and us. He has called us to say with Paul, "We which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord." He would have it so. He would have us expecting Him from day to day. He would have us with our loins girt and our lamps burning, as those that wait for their Lord.

Does this daily expectation of Christ interfere in any measure, let me ask, with the discharge of our duties here? On the contrary, it helps immensely in their discharge. We are not called to anything which we might not well be glad the Lord should find us doing when He comes. And for my own part, if I knew the Lord were coming at a given hour to-morrow, I believe and hope I should see my patients and do the work He has given me to do till the glad moment when I heard the blessed "shout" which should bid me rise to gaze face to face on Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.

But I cannot close without asking you whether you are all ready to meet the Lord. What an awful future for those who are left behind! And what a contrast with the future of those who are casting blood-bought crowns before the throne, and tuning blood-bought harps to the praise of a redeeming God and the glories of the Lamb, whilst the dragon is come down in wrath to this earth and the frightful trinity of evil are preparing the vintage of the earth for Him who "treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Oh, my hearer, the gospel calls you to peace with God. "As though God did beseech by us, we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Oh, bow to these entreaties! Believe the grace that seeks the lost! Receive it by faith! Confess yourself a guilty and helplessly lost sinner before God, and accept, as such, the salvation God announces to you in the gospel! Do now, I pray you, *by Christ*, "believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that OUR FAITH AND HOPE MIGHT BE IN GOD."

THE DAYS ARE AT HAND, AND THE EFFECT OF EVERY VISION.

LECTURE V.

"GIVE THE KING THY JUDGMENTS, O GOD."

> "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.
> He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy and shall break in pieces the oppressor.
> In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
> He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."
>
> Read Psalm lxxii.

Amongst the usurpers whom the brightness of the Lord's coming will sweep from the scene thenceforth to be filled with His glories, the most prominent, for many reasons, will be the one known in Old Testament prophecies as "the king." We are already sadly familiar with him. He is *not* the one hailed with, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." "I am come," said the Lord Jesus sorrowingly, with a yearning heart which lingered over Israel that *would* not be gathered; "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." The king that came in lowly grace and in His Father's name was rejected. "We have no king

but Cæsar." The one who shall come in lawless pride and in his own name will be received, and the apostate nation of Israel will go to "the king with ointment." The finger of God has traced for us many dark passages in the sadly, the awfully eventful history of this lawless one who dares to take the place due to the true son of David, and to Him alone. His end was before us last week, when we saw that Tophet is prepared for "the king," that he will be consumed by the Spirit of Christ's mouth—"cast alive into a lake burning with fire and brimstone."

Nor is "the king" alone in this terrible condemnation. The representative of Gentile power shares the same doom. Israel's unfaithfulness of old gave occasion to the grant of sovereign power in the earth to the Gentiles in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. But if Israel had been unfaithful, and God could suffer His people no longer but set them aside for a time, to take them up again in grace, the Gentiles have proved equally unfaithful. The last Gentile empire will finish its term of power in open revolt against God. The beast, the last heir of the power committed to the Gentiles, as well as the apostate king in Judea, will be cast into the lake of fire.

God's answer to the raging of the heathen (Gentiles) and to the vain imaginations of the people (Israel) is, "Yet have I set MY king upon my holy hill of Zion." What a relief to have done with the king come in his own name, too readily received by Christ-rejecting Israel! And what relief that at length faith can sing in triumph —the Spirit of God Himself strikes the chord—"Give

THE KING thy judgments, O God!" None but the Son of David should ever have borne that sacred title, but He will now make it glorious.

Last week we saw that in all God's dealings with the earth, Israel is for Him the first and central nation. Of old "he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Later in the manifestation of His purposes He built Zion and established His throne there. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING," should have been ever true. He made both His "name" and His "presence" to dwell in the house which the son of David built in the city of David. But the maintenance of blessing there depended upon the responsibility of man and especially of the house of David. Alas for man! Where has he not failed? How was the throne of God in Israel maintained by the sons of David with whom the responsibility was left? Listen to the testimony of the Spirit of God as to one of them: "He reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he caused his children to pass through the fire . . . . And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made in the house of God." (2 Chron. xxxiii. 3–7.) To another idolatrous king, on the throne of David, the Lord addresses these solemn words, "Hear ye now, O house of

David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Is. vii. 13–14.)

There is no hope for the house of David—there is no hope for Israel save in Immanuel. He alone can accomplish the purposes of God as to Zion; His feet shall make it glorious. But before God brings Him upon the scene the Gentiles must be put to the test. This trial we have seen and its results. We dwelt last week upon the destruction of Gentile power presented under three different forms, and the result in each case is the establishment of universal and enduring power in the hand of Christ. The great Gentile image was struck in its feet by the little stone which, after it had shivered to dust the whole image so that the wind carried it away, itself became a mountain and filled the whole earth. "And in the days of these kings (those of the Roman empire in its future form) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." It is this kingdom we are to consider to-night.

But in Daniel vii. we have this same power dealt with in a *judicial* way. It is judged before the Ancient of days in the most solemn and searching manner. It is condemned entirely and eternally; the beast is given to the burning flame. The kingdom is given to the Son of man and the heavenly saints take it with Him. It is this kingdom which forms the subject of our inquiry this evening.

Lastly, in Revelation xix., this Gentile power is dealt

with by the victorious rider and his army. The beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. Their master, Satan, is bound for a thousand years. The saints are "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." It is this reign that we must now consider.

You will have already remarked, my brethren, that in every instance judgment brings in the reign of Christ. We shall find it so in all the prophets. The unspeakable blessing for this earth of Messiah's reign is always introduced by judgment.

When we considered the rising of the Sun of righteousness, that is, the manifestation of Christ, we saw very clearly that the deliverance of creation "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." When the number of the "many sons" God is now "bringing to glory" is complete, that manifestation will take place. "When Christ who is our life shall appear [be manifested] then shall ye also appear [be manifested] with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) It is, as we then saw, upon those on earth who fear the Lord's name that the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings. It could not be for the church, for she must be manifested *with* Christ when He appears in glory. It is her happy privilege to expect the Morning Star before the Sun rises. The rising of the sun transforms the face of nature—the whole earth responds to its beams. But the Morning Star is for those only who watch through the night for a heavenly bridegroom, not for those who belong to the earth. Moreover, the church *must* have been called away "by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto

Him" before the remnant in Israel, with a calling so different from hers, can be developed. To the faithful now the promise is, "I will *keep thee* FROM the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

The church is no sooner missed on earth and seen in heaven (see Rev. iv. and v.), than faithful ones are found upon earth with hopes and a calling very different from the church. In Revelation vi. there is a cry for vengeance, till then unknown in the New Testament. Their cry corresponds to the one so common in the Psalms which would be incongruous and impossible in the lips of Christians who, like Christ, pray for the forgiveness and blessing of their enemies. This cry belongs to a period when God's good work in gathering out the bride is finished, and when He is preparing the world for "the first begotten." His spirit in the saints of that day is a spirit of judgment. How "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of nations. Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee: for thy judgments are made manifest!"

It is for those in whom the Spirit of Christ thus produces a cry suited to God's then present action that the Sun of righteousness arises. And what is the result? "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do this." Their cry has been heard. The remnant—"the third part" which we saw brought through the fire and tried as gold is tried—will form the "generation to

come," the "generation that shall be born," to whom the Lord will say, "It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." It is no longer, thank God, "lo-ammi" (not my people), which was said of the old, "the sinful and adulterous generation."

This rising of the sun, "the day spring from on high," we found clearly identified with the day in which "his feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east . . . . And the Lord, my God, shall come and all the saints with thee . . . . And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and His name One." (Zech. xiv. 4–9.)

I am quite aware that many excellent men have thought, and that many still think, that the time of universal blessing will be brought about by the preaching of the gospel. But is this the teaching of scripture? If it be, it commands our faith. But if scripture *never* teaches it, but distinctly teaches the opposite, there can be no profit and there must be immense loss in clinging to human teaching which is contrary to scripture. We have already considered this subject, to some extent, but it may be profitable to say a very few words upon it again.

And, first, what is the purpose of the preaching of the gospel? It is preached in God's wisdom, and in His perfect grace "to take out of them a people for His name." The end of the preaching of the gospel, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is the gathering of the bride of Christ; the calling out of that blessed body, the church, which is already one with Christ, and is to be

united with Him in the day of His glory. The blessed tale of heavenly grace which the Holy Ghost testifies in the gospel, wins in this far off land a bride for the heir of all who has not yet entered into possession of the inheritance. (See the beautiful figure of Rebecca being brought to Isaac, Gen. xxiv.)

The purpose of the gospel is the calling out of this bride during the time of Israel's temporary setting aside. Its purpose will be fully accomplished when that body is led up and presented to her heavenly Lord. The gospel is not sent out for the blessing of the earth, but for the gathering out of a body which is, and will always be, heavenly; but which will be seen in glory associated with Christ when He reigns over a renewed earth. Let any one who has hitherto believed that God has sent out the gospel for the purpose of converting the world point out a single passage from which he gathers it. If he cannot at once do so, let him search the scriptures through and through with all care; He will never find such a purpose hinted at. Am I limiting the grace of God? God forbid. I have insisted more than once upon the full and free gospel He has sent out into a world of sin. Find me a needy heart, and it shall be my happy privilege to bid it welcome to the full satisfying portion treasured in the person of Christ for the needy soul; I shall be but feebly preaching *something* of that wondrous gospel. Find me a burdened conscience, and I shall know that I am but in a very small measure bringing "the unsearchable riches of Christ" when I announce to it the peace which is made by the blood of the cross, and bid it find its rest where God has found

His highest glory. Nay, if I stand in a synagogue as Paul at Antioch, or in a street of Christendom or heathendom, and say, "Be it known unto you, therefore . . . . that through this man is *preached* [*announced*] *the forgiveness of sins*: and by him, ALL THAT BELIEVE are *justified* from all things;" I shall but be giving one expression of the manifold grace of God. Wondrous gospel of the blessed God!

But no one who has carefully read the word will deny that, until the end of the age, the gate is strait and the way narrow that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

We have seen, moreover, the direct testimony of the New Testament in many parts, that, so far from the preaching of the gospel bringing a millennium, the last days of the present dispensation are the worst. "This know also," says the Holy Ghost, "that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2 Tim. iii. 1.) "But evil men and seducers shall wax *worse and worse*, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. iii. 13.) "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.) "How that they [the apostles] told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts." (Jude 18.)

In the parables in Matthew which we briefly dwelt upon in Lecture II., there was no interval left between the time when the Son of man sowed the good seed in His field, and the harvest, that is, the end of the age, when the wicked are to be cast into the furnace of fire, and the righteous to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

In the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter ii., the mystery of iniquity was at work in the apostle's days. It was to work on and on until the man of sin was manifested, who was to be consumed by the Lord at His coming; leaving thus no room whatever for a period of universal blessing upon the earth. But the testimony of scripture that judgment and not the gospel brings in the millennium is so abundant that we shall see it in almost every text that we have to quote this evening.

But now that it is a question of blessing upon earth, Israel is the central figure. The consideration of the passage already quoted from Deuteronomy (chap. xxxii. 8–9), and the unconditional promises made to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob leave no doubt upon the mind that the nations, *as nations*, shall be blessed in the true "seed," but in connection with and in subordination to the earthly people of God.

Let me remind you of the unequivocal teaching of Romans xi., as we saw it on the last occasion, that "Israel as a whole shall be saved" in contrast with the present state of things in which Israel as a whole is set aside, though individuals amongst them, who believe are saved and "added to the church." "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Faith in Israel even in the darkest days has ever pleaded these "promises made unto the fathers" — made without any conditions whatsoever. Daniel pleaded them (chap. ix.) and received, in answer, communications sad enough for the seventy weeks, but blessed, unspeakably blessed

for those who "wait and come" to the full term of the indignation, and to the time when "*thy* people shall be *delivered*, every one that is written in the book." (See Dan. xii., and compare Rev. xvii. 8, and xiv. 1.)

The good pleasure of God, His gracious counsels for His people, beloved for the fathers' sake will then be accomplished. Israel shall have been "in bitterness" for her so-long rejected Messiah, "as one is in bitterness for his first-born." They shall at length have exclaimed with tears of repentance and tears of joy, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Israel, gathered around the true Son of David in their own metropolis, shall sing, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness to the king's son." The word shall at length be accomplished, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion." What a contrast with its present condition! Anything but beautiful, anything but the delight of the whole earth, is the forlorn and miserable Zion, "trodden down of the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

It is quite possible that some of you may be ready to ask if we should take Zion thus literally, or if it be not rather used figuratively to set forth the church? It has, I am aware, been often so understood, but with great loss, not only in intelligence of the teaching of scripture as to a future day, but also in the appreciation of what the church of God is, and of its place in this world. A few brief remarks on the question of spiritualizing Zion, Jerusalem, and Israel, may be helpful to some who really desire to learn the mind of God in His word.

And first I would remind you there is a great difference between the interpretation of scripture and its application. As a matter of interpretation I am persuaded and I think I can shew plainly that Zion in the Old Testament never means anything but Zion, nor Israel anything but Israel. But it does not follow that the application of the teaching as to this place and this people ends there. Where is the Christian who doubts that Israel came out of Egypt and passed through the wilderness? Who would cast a doubt upon the facts recorded in Exodus or Numbers, as literal facts? Yet, "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come." The past history of Israel is the past history of Israel *alone*, but it has many solemn applications to ourselves. The future history of Zion and Jerusalem and Israel is *their* history and not ours, but it is communicated to us for our profit and because our Lord calls us not servants. Many of the characters and circumstances of the Old Testament are used in a spiritual way in the New. Does that invalidate them as real and literal persons and facts? And if not in the past, why in the future? Adam was a "figure of him that was to come." Joseph, Moses, David were in many ways beautiful types of Christ. Besides their typical reference to Christ many a precious lesson has been learned from the inspired records of their lives. Still those records are literally true and personal.

There are those who tell us that Genesis i. is not an account of God's work in creation, but merely a chapter of spiritual symbols. This you will agree with me is a

bare-faced denial of scripture. Yet I think a person who denies that scripture reveals to us the future of the literal Jerusalem and Israel would find great difficulty in answering one who sees nothing in Genesis i. but spiritual figures. Again, the Jews cling to the promises of Messiah's future glory. They take them in their plain, natural sense. Assuredly they could not be clearer, more positive or more calculated to command the faith of one who bows to God's word. But the Jews refuse to see Messiah's humiliation and cutting off, though these truths are as plainly revealed for a simple soul. If you, my brethren, refuse the plain testimony of scripture as to the glorious reign of Messiah over Israel, how can you urge upon a Jew the testimony, not a whit more clear and plain, of the rejection and death of the blessed Lord?

As however many Christians find this their great difficulty in receiving truths which the word of God undoubtedly teaches, and truths essential to the understanding of God's ways, I hope to shew you, as the passages come before us, how evident it is that the Spirit of God speaks of the places and people named. But there is one general consideration which of itself ought to be enough. In a large number of passages the sins and guilt of Zion or of Israel are spoken of; then follow the judgments of God upon them, and lastly the salvation and blessing into which the people are brought. Take as an illustration Isaiah i. 25: "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" &c. Is this the church? It might be said of Christendom, I admit, but no one will contend that this is its meaning here. Nor will any

desire to apply it to the church. It would be a terrible day for us if God said of her, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies!" No, it is plainly Jerusalem. But if so, has she since been called "the city of righteousness, the faithful city?" Never. Then here is an unfulfilled prophecy about the literal city of Jerusalem—so guilty and polluted—which must yet be accomplished, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The *Zion* which was the harlot city shall be redeemed with judgment (not the gospel), and they that return of her (margin) with righteousness." But the transgressors are destroyed, "they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed;" shewing still further that Jerusalem, not the church, is in question. Read in this connexion, chapter ii., where the law goes forth from this same Zion in the day when "the mountain of the Lord's house is established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it;" where it is said, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks . . . . neither shall they learn war any more." Is not this the millennium? Is it not from the literal Jerusalem, of whose judgments we have just read, that word of the Lord goes forth? For any believer who desires to know the truth and will of his God and Father this one passage will be sufficient.

Take, as another illustration of the same argument, Psalm lxxiv. 2. What Zion is meant, so long "left unto you desolate," that the Spirit says, "Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations?" Is it not that city which is in purpose, and ought to be in fact, "the mountain of His holiness," "the city of the great king," but

which is "trodden down of the Gentiles" "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation?"

For, mark, it is the city God has cast off. (See ver. 1.) Has God cast off the church? Turn to the New Testament and see! Is there ever such language used about the church? Is there aught comparable to it?* Are we to falsify the calling of the church in order to drag away from Israel the promises God intended for her? But how constantly a low thought of what the church is before God, goes with the attempt to spiritualize Zion, so as to rob it of its blessings, none too great for a heart that loves its Redeemer and King!

Let us, however, turn to the direct testimony of scripture as to Messiah's kingdom and the kingdom of the Son of man. There is a very beautiful little Psalm (lxvii.) which illustrates, with much clearness and sweetness, the place Israel takes in that reign. "God be merciful to us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us." Whose language is this, beloved brethren? Clearly, that of Israel. The Christian is not taught of God to use such language. It does not comport with his high calling. The Christian's place before God is in Christ.

* It is true that the professing church, after every member of Christ has been gathered to Him above, will be spued out of Christ's mouth. But this does not affect the argument in the text, for Zion is commonly applied to the true church, and not to that which is merely such in profession. Moreover, when Christ spues out of His mouth that loathsome lukewarm bearer of His name, *He never takes it back again.* But of Zion He says, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee."

Never in the New Testament will you find saints of God asking that He should cause His face to shine upon them. God *has* caused His face to shine upon them: He has given them the very place which Christ has before Him. The thought of God hiding His face from a Christian is one that has been put into people's minds by the great enemy of God and His people. Never, never, did God hide His face from the Son of His love until He was made sin for us. Then that face was hidden from Christ that it might not be hidden from us. As the result we now have the place of blessing which is Christ's portion before God. He took upon the cross our place before the judgment of God that we might, in the power of His resurrection, have His place before that same God, now fully glorified about sin. The face of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ shines ever upon each child of grace; *ever*, morning, noon, and night, thank God! Nor is this blessing surprising when we see a Christ obedient unto death, a Son of man glorified in heaven, and a Holy Ghost sent down because of His being glorified above! May we walk ever in the light of that face which *does* shine upon us! For although the Christian cannot lose the favour of God, he may lose communion with Him. Even then the word of God does not put into his lips the cry we are considering. It insists upon confession that communion may be re-established, for God cannot have communion with sin. May we be kept in the remembrance of this, humbly and watchfully walking with Christ!

But the prayer of this Psalm will be perfectly in season in the lips of Israel. It is a prayer that the blessing which

the high priest pronounced of old in Israel may rest upon them. Yes, moved by grace to repentance, what they now desire—what they now cry for, is that God's face may shine upon them; a blessing of which they have long deprived themselves through sin, but which shall be restored in grace. But what is to be the result of God's face shining upon His people? "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." God's face is to shine upon His people Israel, in order that His way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations. You will remark that in this Psalm "the people" is used for Israel, as distinguished from the Gentiles. This is constantly the case in scripture. In Romans xv. 2, the apostle quotes from Deuteronomy and the Psalms. In the Old Testament it is "the people" in contradistinction to "the nations" which are called "Gentiles" in the New Testament. Again Paul, before Agrippa, says, "Delivering thee from *the people* and from the Gentiles."

"Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee." Where is the heart that does not beat faster and stronger as it contemplates the gracious answer to this inspired prayer when the "people scattered and peeled," shall, in the land given in perpetuity to their fathers, "praise God in His sanctuary?" It is Israel that is to praise God. Then in verse 4, "Oh let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth." You will remark that Israel has here a place of greater nearness than the nations. They are said to be priests, and, accordingly, they are to offer praise to God; whilst

the nations are to be glad and sing for joy. These enjoy the blessing and express their joy, no doubt, with thankful hearts, but "praise" is to characterise "the people." He will judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Here, too, there is greater nearness for Israel, He takes His place amongst the people to judge them; His government extends wider to "the nations upon earth." "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

The point I press upon you, and on account of which I read the Psalm, is the remarkable way in which the blessing spreads from the people. Indeed, until Israel is again a people praising God, the earth will not yield her increase. Until the centre of the earth is established in blessing, the outer circles will not yield the increase it is God's purpose to produce in grace. But when "God shall bless us" (Israel) then "all the ends of the earth shall fear him." This is entirely different from the present state of things. When God blesses us, Christians, all the ends of the earth do not fear; nor does the earth yield her increase. That day will witness a work of universal blessing. Israel will be converted; the ends of the earth will, at least, *fear*; many will be converted too. God is not now blessing *nations*. His gospel is sent out into all the world. A goodly number of individuals are converted, thank God! Still it is always true *now* that "many are called, but few chosen." The privileges of those who now believe are the highest it is possible for God to give or man to receive.

We, as the church of God, have a far nearer place than Israel even in the day of glory. You will keep in mind the threefold classification the Spirit of God makes of men in the New Testament: the Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God. For the earth God will make the Jew the head, and the Gentile the tail; but a Christian is neither a Jew nor a Gentile. He belongs to the church of God, and the church of God takes rank with Christ, as the wife takes rank with her husband. The church is the bride of Christ now, according to the counsels of God, and ere long it will be said, "His wife hath made herself ready." The church's place is Christ's place. Israel will be blest under Christ, and the Gentiles will "rejoice *with his people*;" but the church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 23.) If we have apprehended our own place through pure and marvellous grace, we shall find no difficulty whatever in according to Israel the place which God gives her. If we have not apprehended our place, we may be jealous perhaps as we see that so many lovely portions of God's word really belong to Israel and not to the church. But indeed, in another sense, *all* belongs to the church looked at as "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." All is surely *His*—all then is ours! We shall share with Christ the fullest possible blessing. There is no part of the blessing which springs from His death, whether in the millennium or in the eternal state, that we shall not share with the Lord Jesus Christ. All that He has received as man; all the glory given Him as the one who has glorified God upon the earth, we shall share with Him. His own eternal godhead, of course, is a

thing entirely apart from that of which I speak; but all that He has *received* as the one who has been obedient unto death for the accomplishment of God's purposes—all that we shall share with Him.

But to return, seeing that the Gentile power is set aside—a power which was set up because of Israel's unfaithfulness—supreme authority reverts to Israel, and reverts to Israel in the person of David's Son. "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." If you will read Psalm lxxxix. you will find He has had to "visit their transgressions with a rod and their iniquity with stripes." He has done so in taking from the house of David for a long period the power He had given to it. But it was only for a time. "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him . . . . His seed shall endure for ever, and *his throne as the sun before me.*" The heir of the house of David is the blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Read with me, if you please, a verse in Luke i., that you may see that the Spirit of God gives the Lord this place. Verse 32: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Now what was the throne of His father David? If anything could be clear it is clear that Christ will sit upon the throne of His father David, whatever that throne may have been. And what was it? It was the throne God gave him over his people Israel; over the whole people of God—Judah and Israel united. This throne the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son

of David, is heir to; "and the Lord God shall give (it) unto Him." "And," says the Spirit of God, "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." I know that this has been spiritualized. It has been contended that Christ's kingdom is a spiritual one. I am quite prepared to admit that there is a spiritual kingdom. We have seen already the form the kingdom takes because of Christ's rejection. But does this passage speak of a spiritual kingdom. Not unless David's were a spiritual kingdom. It is simply impossible, without doing violence to the word of God, to get rid of the truth that Christ will reign over the kingdom which David governed. David never had a spiritual throne, but a natural one; and Christ will have an earthly throne, and one which will never give place to another; hence it is for ever and ever. I do not say that the Lord Jesus Christ will ever dwell upon earth with the church, His bride. God forbid! But the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over Israel will be absolute and undisputed, and the earthly seat of His government will be Mount Zion: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." David's throne was at Jerusalem, and Christ's throne will be there. Thank God the link between earth and heaven will be still more intimate than when the heir of the promises lay a homeless wanderer at the foot of the ladder, from the top of which God spake to him in pure and marvellous grace, whilst ministering spirits, "that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word," ascended and descended, cheerful servants of His gracious will.

In order, however, that Christ may reign over "the people," Israel must be gathered to their land. This restoration is the happy theme of a considerable part of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and most of the prophets; a refreshing relief from their inspired testimonies against the wickedness of the people. The return of Israel to their land is almost constantly connected with the blessing God has prepared for them beneath the sway of the king He will set upon His holy hill of Zion.

Let us take a few out of the many portions which shew this restoration in an unequivocal manner. The first I will ask you to look at is Isaiah x. 20—xii. 6, a portion which, if there were no other, would suffice to satisfy an honest soul that desires to know the truth of God, that Israel will be restored to their land, will be converted and blessed beneath the direct government of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the holy One of Israel, in truth." We find here and in the three following verses the spared remnant which we have before seen in Zechariah and elsewhere. The mass, in league with the Satan-inspired Roman power and with Antichrist, will perish. "For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined in the midst of all *the land*." This "consumption" we are already familiar with. In Zechariah we saw two-thirds cut off; and this too "in the midst of the land." But

the "consumption" can never go beyond what God has determined.

The spared ones, the remnant, shall be morally characterised by principles the opposite of those which mark the many who perish. *These* will be in covenant with Rome, "the *remnant* shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God;" they "shall stay upon Jehovah, the holy One of Israel in truth." *They will be converted.*

Verse 24 encourages the people of God *dwelling in Zion* in regard to the Assyrian; "for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease and mine anger in their destruction." Some may be ready to refer this portion to God's deliverance of Israel from the Assyrian in a past day. Let me remind such that the greater part of Israel—the ten tribes—never were delivered. Moreover "*the* indignation" and God's wrath with Israel has not yet ceased. They are still scattered to the four winds because of their sins. The deliverance here foretold will be at the "last end of the indignation:" see Daniel viii. 19, and compare with it Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21. And, lastly, this deliverance is as complete as that of Israel from the Midianites at the rock of Oreb, and as their miraculous redemption from Egypt; it is as glorious as when they passed the Red Sea in triumph.

Reserving for the present the description of the reign of the righteous Branch, only remarking that, as ever, it is introduced by judgment, not by the gospel; we find (chap. xi. 10) that "in *that* day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."

When "that day" shall be, cannot be doubted for a moment—it is the day of Messiah's power. He Himself will be the ensign and rallying-point of "the people," that is, Israel; but the Gentiles shall seek to Him also. "And it shall come to pass in *that* day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." Not a few will be found in the "islands of the sea" in which we dwell. "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." If the Spirit of God would communicate to us the truth which we are seeking to shew to-night, that Judah and Israel will be gathered to their own land, what language could He have found more calculated to produce that impression? Do terms exist more explicit than those that we have just read in which He could have conveyed the truth? It appears to me, my friends, quite impossible to escape the truth here taught unless the word of God be distinctly rejected. An event is here foretold with names and details incapable of spiritualising. It has certainly not yet taken place, for Israel has never been gathered at all since they were dispersed by the Assyrians. A few Jews, indeed, were brought back from Babylon. But no one will make the mistake of thinking that the Spirit of God speaks of that partial restoration. For, besides, the fact that "the outcasts of Israel" were not then assembled, when did even Judah "fly upon the

shoulders of the Philistines toward the west and spoil them of the east together?" Again, when did Jehovah "destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea?" When did He make them go dryshod over the river? Where was the triumph, where the glory? Where were the songs of deliverance that Israel sang "in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt?" How evident that every word is yet future!

But the moral characteristics are even more in contrast with the past than are the outward historical facts. "The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." Not only, beloved friends, are Ephraim, the ten tribes, and Judah, the two, both brought back to their land; but they are restored in such blessing and with such a change of heart, that Judah, the more powerful, does not vex Ephraim, and Ephraim does not envy Judah. Both are changed; both are blessed; both are content. This interesting fact will be seen with still greater clearness in comparing with this verse a portion in Ezekiel xxxvii. 15. There we find under the figure of two sticks that Judah and Ephraim will not only cease to envy and to vex, but will be cordially and entirely one. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them *into their own land:* and I will make them *one nation* in the land *upon the mountains* of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any

more. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols," &c. Nothing which has yet happened answers in any one point or in any degree to the lovely description of Israel and Judah in these verses. It must therefore be future. To spiritualize it is plainly impossible, for not only is the people named in the two branches, but the land is named with special care, not only as "*their* land," but as "the mountains of Israel," as "the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt." Moreover it is of the people who before have "defiled themselves with their idols" that the Spirit of God speaks. He will "save them out of the dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them." It would be of no use attempting to shew anything from the word of God to one who would not receive teaching so plain in its simple and natural sense.

But how lovely the picture the finger of God here draws of His people "beloved for the fathers' sake." No more separations, nor any more jealousies! No more idols, nor any more sins! The Man after God's heart—the true David, is king over a united Israel! Jehovah's sanctuary is amongst them in the sight of the heathen; and His "covenant of peace" "shall be an everlasting covenant with them." "They shall be my people, and I will be their God."

Let those who seek to disparage the truth of the reign of Christ upon earth by speaking of it as "carnal" say once for all, if this cleansing of Israel from all their filthiness and from all their idols be indeed *carnal!* Is the pure grace of God, which through the work of His Son makes a covenant of peace with the once rebellious

nation which cast out that Son—is this *carnal* too? Thank God for His grace! It touches the heart, and it touches it deeply to see the long-lingering grace of God for that stiff-necked people, at length satisfied! But what a heart is the heart of our God! If we knew it better, the grace in store for Israel would surprise us less and cause us to worship more. Next to the marvellous display of grace in the calling and blessing of the church, the history of His ways of goodness towards Israel shall most fill eternity with His endless praise. And even now the heart bows in worship as it hears the God of all grace say, "And the heathen shall know that I, Jehovah, do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore."

But to return to our chapter, "And they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them, and the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." It would be quite impossible to spiritualize this. With the best will in the world it would be a fruitless and thankless endeavour. But indeed, the simple truth that a child who looks to God and seeks to learn of Him might receive, is always that which God intends to impart.

It is very evident that no past deliverance of Israel answers to this. What a contrast with the days of Ezra and Nehemiah! Here it is triumph and power. The whole land given to the fathers will be possessed. Every enemy will be subdued. The Philistines, the old inveterate, irrepressible enemy *in* the land, shall be humbled, and the three neighbouring nations who are expressly said (Dan. xi. 41) to escape the hand of the king of the north, are to bow beneath the hand of restored and victorious Israel.

But let me beg you to notice with special care and attention what immediately follows these interesting verses. I ask you to notice it particularly; and I ask you with a rest of heart that I cannot express. The nation of Israel *at last* sings with holy, chastened, but triumphant joy, "God is my salvation," "Jah Jehovah is my strength and my song." For indeed it is Israel's song, "in *that* day." Hers is not what people have thought fit to call a carnal restoration. Oh, the exceeding riches of God's grace! His earthly people will not only be gathered; they will be converted. And listen to the song they will sing! Surely there is not a heart that knows Christ—surely there is not one who through grace has sung the "new song" already here and who expects to sing it above; there cannot be one such who envies Israel the song they will sing in that day. We sing a higher one. Ours is a deeper-toned song, and we sing it already in these bodies of humiliation. Yes, the Christian's is a loftier song and a sweeter one; for God has revealed all His grace and made known all His heart of deepest love in the Person

of Christ. It is God we know, but we know Him in Christ. "Who *by him* do believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."

Hence we sing not only of salvation and strength in Jehovah. He has come down in grace to the lowest point of humiliation. The One who "clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sackcloth their covering" has bowed down to receive "the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Priceless grace! He has even given His back to the smiters. Glorious humiliation!

> "Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Ah, what glories a redeeming God has won in that full and blessed revelation of Himself in Christ!

And what is the result for us? "I have declared unto them thy name *(Father)*, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Yes, my brethren, we cry Abba, Father, by the Holy Ghost: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.) We are loved as Christ is loved. That love is in us, and *Christ* is in us.

What a message have we received from the side of the empty tomb where the Lord of glory had lain in purest and precious grace! "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Oh what rich and

heavenly blessing is ours! And all through Christ and *in* Christ, the revelation of God to our souls! Well may we sing here below, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!" But—crowns at His feet and harps tuned to His praise—how shall we sing, "Thou art worthy!" Yes, we shall sing it before Israel's glad and holy song shall make the towers of Salem and the strong bulwarks of Zion to resound, "the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song."

Bless God for the song of Israel in that day! And bless Him too, for as many hearts here as have thrilled at the sound of it! "In that day thou shalt say." In what day? In the day that "they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them"—in that day when God shall have made for them "a highway," such as that by which He brought them out of Egypt. Did He not then lead them as on eagles' wings? Did He not bring them out of Egypt and into Canaan in triumph? Did He not lead them dryshod through the Red Sea, and make that which seemed sure destruction to be their complete deliverance from Egypt? Did He not dry up the Jordan before them and make sorrow to "take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina?" He will bring them from Assyria, and "from the four corners of the earth," "like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. And in *that* day thou shalt say, O Lord;" or "Jehovah," the special name which is characteristic of His relationship with Israel, as "Father" expresses the relationship He bears to us. "O Jehovah, I will praise

thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." How sweet the song of a newly converted soul! God's righteous anger is turned away; it has fallen on a willing and all-sufficient Victim. The righteously angry God of a little while ago is Himself the Comforter of His repentant and converted people. Oh, what joy "in the presence of the angels of God" when the tears of repentance shall give place to accents of praise—when the Lord shall have spoken comfortably to Jerusalem!

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted." It is ever so! God's grace is to His own eternal praise. *His* name is exalted. We have seen Christ glorified and admired *in* the saints; that is in the *heavenly* glory. Here Jehovah's name is exalted in "the people he has formed for his praise" in the *earthly* glory.

"Sing unto Jehovah; for he hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth." When a thing is "known in all the earth" it is always either judgment to purify the earth or millennial blessing in it. Here Jehovah has done excellent things: "for Jehovah hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem." This will indeed be known in all the earth, for "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Surely it is the joy our God is

preparing for Himself that we taste when the heart swells at the thought of all His grace to Israel!

"Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

When the heart is supremely happy it does not know what envy is. On the contrary, happiness is always communicative; it loves to share itself with others. A really happy bosom is a stranger to envy; and if a Christian is not supremely happy he ought to be. Object of purest grace, vessel of mercy ordained to glory, God has made him unutterably happy. The good Spirit by which God has shed His love abroad in our hearts has formed them for communion with God in the delight He finds in His own grace. I speak what your hearts feel, my brethren, when I say that so far from envying Israel a song like this, we rejoice with them in anticipation. I had almost said we sing it in our hearts with them! And this, whilst we sing a loftier song for ourselves. They draw water from the wells of salvation. Happy people! But we, beloved!—that blessed One who has come down in grace and opened up wells of salvation from which Israel draws water, is the very bridegroom of our hearts. He is the one to whom we can sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." They draw water out of the wells of salvation, but the exhaustless spring which fills these wells is the full satisfying portion of our souls in His own Person, known and enjoyed by the Holy Ghost. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in him*, a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his

belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Our portion then is the Holy Ghost *in* the soul, so ministering Christ as to be an ever-springing well of ceaseless eternal joy. It is to have such a fulness of blessing by the Holy Ghost that streams of refreshing flow from us in this "dry and thirsty land, where no water is."

At all events, God's blessed unchangeable purpose is one day to put a new song into Israel's mouth, and we shall look down from heaven and see the blessing of Israel as they sing in their own land a song of praise to a redeeming God.

Let us turn now to one or two other scriptures which must be very briefly referred to, because of the lateness of the hour. There is one of remarkable beauty in Jeremiah xxiii. Similar passages, equally interesting and equally convincing, are to be found in abundance all through the prophets and the Psalms. Verse 3: "I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them." The same people that have been "scattered" shall be "gathered." It could not be a literal scattering and a figurative gathering. Such a thought would do violence to all language. And what is the character, and what the results of this gathering of Israel. Verse 5: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel

shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." I repeat the remark that I made before:— If the Spirit of God would convey to us His purpose of restoring Israel to their own land and blessing them beneath the sway of the Son of David, could He find words more explicit, less capable of misunderstanding, in which to express it? Here we find Israel saved and Judah dwelling safely. It is no partial restoration. The restoration from Babylon has more of contrast than of analogy with the restoration here spoken of.

Is this "salvation" then a mere natural deliverance from captivity and dispersion? On the contrary, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" is their rallying-point; a title which recalls the words of another prophet (Is. xlv. 25): "In the Lord shall *all* the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Israel and Judah are not only to be restored to the land, given in pure grace to their fathers, but they are to be justified and to glory in Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness. The jealousy with which some people would restrict such passages to their application to Christians betrays a very feeble sense of the full blessing in which the grace of God has set us. Have we the justification in both its great aspects of which Romans v. speaks, and are we afraid that passages in the

prophets, which speak of justification, should be understood to speak primarily of Israel? Is it possible that a soul who is "justified by faith," who has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," who has "access by faith into this grace (favour) in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" is it possible that one who is "now justified by his blood," and who can "*joy in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ," should be unwilling to accord to the children of Israel the portion we are considering as intended of God for them? My brethren, our cup runs over—we have "justification of life," we are "made the righteousness of God in Christ," yea, we have the full place of blessing in which a risen Christ is before God; we can rejoice with deepest and divine joy in the blessing of Israel as here foretold. In such blessing, beneath the sway of the "righteous branch," "the root and offspring of David," no wonder that the deliverance from Egypt has been forgotten! Wondrous as was that deliverance they will not say, "The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt," but "The Lord liveth which brought up . . . . Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land."

Again in chapter xxxi. 31, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;)

but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Here again the evidence is irresistible that it is of Israel and not of Christians that the Spirit of God speaks. The new covenant is made with the same people as was the old; with the people that God led by the hand out of Egypt. Nay, more, it is with *the people who broke* the former covenant. It might be possible to spiritualise the coming out of Egypt, but it would be hopeless to try to fasten the covenant of law and its breaking upon the church of God.

But I shall be met, I am aware, by the question, "Are not *we* under the new covenant?" The answer is simple, we not only receive all the blessings of the new covenant, but we are united to Him who is "the Mediator of the new covenant." Here the word is as simple as it is blessed, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." What a triumph of divine grace to magnify itself in that people, so long rebellious! And what a sovereign remedy for all the heart-burnings and enmity of the rival houses of Israel to make with them both and equally the new covenant of purest grace, in which God

forgives their iniquities, and remembers their sin no more!

Let me beg you to read at your leisure the verses which precede those just read. It is refreshing to the soul to witness these gracious unfoldings of the heart of God. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Blessed God, what a heart is Thine! And shall we seek to limit it to its present action of grace in gathering the church?

But mark, dear friends, He has spoken against Ephraim, that is clear and simple. Apply it to the church, and what *can* it mean? And must we *lose* this gracious outflowing of the heart of our God because we *cannot* apply it to the church, and *will not* allow it to Israel?

Again, verse 28, "As I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down . . . . so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith the Lord." Who is this but the "people scattered and peeled," whom Jehovah reluctantly and with yearnings of heart plucked up out of the good land He gave to their fathers? Is His heart then never to have its satisfaction? Oh yes! He will "watch over them (the *same* people) to build and to plant." He will make with them a new covenant in which all the conditions are on one side; "I WILL"—*do all!*

The terms of this covenant give us as regards Israel the chief characters of the millennium. This people,

gathered around Jehovah's sanctuary, shall no longer be beneath a covenant of works. What a mighty change! The law of the Lord shall be in their inward parts, written upon the fleshy tables of their hearts. Compare with this Ezekiel xxxvi. 24, and following verses, where the same restoration to their own land as we have seen here is referred to; and where the same covenant is spoken of. "*Then* (when God brings them to their own land) will I sprinkle clean water upon you. . . . A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Upon their hearts He will write His law. "And I will put my Spirit within you." What a contrast to the old covenant! "As many as are *of the works of the law* are under the curse." But all is blessing here. The will of God is wrought into their inward parts and written by His own finger on their hearts. A tender heart moulded by grace shall be theirs; a heart that finds its joy in hanging child-like on the will of God.

Nor will it be individuals here and there who are brought into blessing. We saw last week that "all Israel shall be saved." So here, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour. . . . Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest." The first *national* conversion, but a complete one! In Mount Ephraim as well as in Zion, then "beautiful for situation;" "from Dan to Beer-sheba;" "from sea to sea" shall *all* know the Lord. "And *all* thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isaiah liv. 13.

The kingdom was wide in Solomon's day, it was mighty too! But it lacked the *new* covenant! *All* the children of Israel were not taught of God. The fine gold soon became dim. Since that day it has been division, and sin, and shame, and scattering. Revivals, thank God! there have been, but short-lived. It wanted the *new* covenant, and its blood, and its Mediator.

But now the blood of the new covenant has been shed; the Mediator has come. True He has been rejected; but it was under the covenant of works. God's word must be made good for the seed of Abraham according to the flesh: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son!" The true "Seed," with all the promises—"the Mediator of the new covenant"—"the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." (Compare Isa. lix. 20, 21.) The covenant in which God will be all for His people, without one claim from them, shall be established "with the house of Israel, *and* with the house of Judah." It could not be the church, for if Israel be the church, what are we to understand by Judah? That covenant—the sure mercies of David—shall be founded upon the death of Christ, and made in the power of His resurrection. It shall be for Israel the full unmingled blessing which this death and this resurrection have availed to give to the people of that God whose "gifts and calling are without repentance." Let any one who has hitherto spoken of a "carnal" reign of Christ *read the terms of the new covenant!*

But if it be more than Solomon-glory both in the blessing of *all* Israel, and as to the extent to which the

kingdom reaches, will it be short-lived like the passing beams of Solomon's throne? "If these ordinances (sun, moon, and stars) depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." We have seen before that the kingdom upon earth is to endure as the sun. Here the seed of Israel endures *as a nation* as long as the ordinances of heaven. "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, *for all that they have done*, saith the Lord." Thank God for His grace! A restored people, a united people, a people blessed in the land, a converted people, a "kingdom of priests"—what a triumphant accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham after "the horror of great darkness" of their sad history has passed for ever! See Genesis xv.

These are ways of grace, my brethren, worthy of our God! They *do* produce worship in our hearts, and well they may! Listen with bowed heads and worshipping hearts—God grant we ever may! "Thy people also shall be *all righteous*: they shall *inherit the land for ever*, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time." Isaiah lx. 21.

I must not dwell upon the rest of the chapter, save to point out the circumstantial details given of "the city of the great king." There are the well-known brook Kidron and the hill Gareb; there are the horse gate, and the tower of Hananeel, which, if they must be spiritualised, would tax the ingenuity of those who would "limit the

Holy One of Israel." But to Israel's everlasting blessing and to ours, He will be GOD in His boundless grace. He will have that city "which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified," He will have it "built to the Lord . . . . holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever."

I had intended dwelling at some length upon Zechariah xii.–xiv., because of the great importance of these chapters. But I must be content with calling your attention to some of the salient points, and asking your diligent and prayerful study of them at your leisure.

In the last lecture we saw that "at the time of the end" there will be several nations meddling with Jerusalem. The Roman power will have confirmed a covenant with "the many" at Jerusalem. This power will be represented there by "the king" who is the wicked counterfeit of Jehovah's king upon His holy hill of Zion. The king of the south (Egypt) will come up against this *Anti-king*, Antichrist. The great northern power, as an "overflowing scourge," will be permitted to commit terrible ravages in the land because of "the protection of idols" on the part of those, under whose shadow, disappointing and cruel as it will be, apostate Israel will seek repose.

In the beginning of this chapter xii. we are in presence of these solemn events. Jerusalem becomes a burdensome stone to all these nations. Each has thought it might roll this stone at its pleasure, but it crushes them all. The Lord interferes for the deliverance of His people. The "time of Jacob's trouble" has reached

its close, and he is "saved out of it." The faithful find their "strength in the Lord of hosts, their God." (Ver. 5.) "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake: *but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.*" (Joel iii. 16.) Let me remark, in passing, how evidently it is of Jerusalem and of the Jews that we read here, "And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again *in her own place, in Jerusalem.*" Language has no meaning if it be not of the literal Jerusalem that we here read. The next verse (7) confirms this beyond dispute, and defies every attempt to give a "spiritual" interpretation. Again, "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them, at that day, shall be as David: and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." That the Lord Jesus has now become the great representative of the house of David cannot be doubted. What a deliverance for the beloved people of God!

But if God takes up thus the cause of His people as against His enemies and theirs, He must have to do with them Himself. For they have been not only a stiffnecked people, but they have rejected and "pierced" the Christ of God. "The spirit of grace and of supplications" is poured on them. They are in bitterness for their rejected king. The house of David is first in this great movement of God's Spirit. As of old they cry "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Indeed, Psalm li., whilst historically occasioned by David's sin, is intended by the Spirit of God as the

language of the spared and delivered ones in Israel at the very moment we are now considering. This holy judgment of self, by the power of the Spirit of God, will be essential to the bringing of Israel into blessing. Acts iii. 19, 20, which we considered on a former occasion, shews that this is what God has been calling Israel to, and what He will produce in the day of which we are speaking. This deep work of the Spirit, this earnest individual repentance (see vers. 12–14)—for it *must* be individual, a real, personal repentance toward God—is what alone God can acknowledge; but this, the fruit of His own grace, is acceptable to Him. His goodness has, at length, led Israel to repentance. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And what is the moral result of this action of the Spirit of God *within* Israel, as well as of God's intervention outwardly *for* them? "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem." Psalm li. 17, 18.

And here in Zechariah, what is the result? "In *that* day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the *inhabitants of Jerusalem*, for sin and for uncleanness." Some of you have, I dare say, applied this to the work of the cross for the sinner now. I have no objection, although here it is cleansing by water. But this could not be without the death of Christ—it was from His side, dead for our sins, that the cleansing water flowed. The cleansing by the word is founded upon atonement by blood. But, as a matter of interpretation, this passage speaks only of the guilty house of David, which brought upon Jerusalem its

complete judgment as the seat of God's throne in the earth, and of that guilty city, too ready to participate in the sins of its kings.

Thus faith has received the one that cometh in the name of the Lord. His supreme goodness, His lingering mercy, His patient love, has won the heart of His people, and bowed it in deep repentance. They are "purged with hyssop" and clean; they are washed "and whiter than snow." It is with bitterness, as for a first-born, that they "look upon him whom they pierced," but they are delivered from blood-guiltiness by the very blood they shed; and their "tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." Compare, in its every word, the solemn and beautiful Psalm which I have quoted, with the work of divine grace recorded in these chapters.

In the last two verses of chapter xiii. we find that the greater part of the Jews who return to their own land perish. "The third part" is "refined as silver is refined," not only by the untold sorrows of that unparalleled day of suffering, but also in the crucible of divine grace. It is this spared remnant—we have seen it more than once before—of whom Jehovah says, "It is my people," to the eternal reversal of the sentence pronounced of old, "lo-ammi;" this new-born nation responds, "The Lord is my God." This is the people that shall be "willing in the day of thy power." The old nation rejected David's Lord. Jehovah answered by setting Him at His right hand. Through grace this new-born nation, purified like gold, will receive Him as the One that "cometh in the name of the Lord." Then shall Jehovah "send the rod of his strength out of Zion,"

and Messiah shall "rule in the midst of (his) enemies." His Melchizedek glory shall then be fully established and displayed; "and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

In the last chapter of Zechariah other details are given us. The Lord will fight against the nations gathered to battle at Jerusalem, whether the western (European) or northern (Asiatic) power. Another northern nation (Russia) will be there in great force. Indeed, Satan will have marshalled all his forces. But he, himself, will be bound in the bottomless pit. His two miserable creatures, the Roman emperor and the Judean king, will be cast into the lake of fire. The great northern foe perishes outwardly on the mountains of Israel—"in *my* land and upon my moutains," says Jehovah (see Isa. xiv. 25); but Tophet is his own place, "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

Thus will perish every foe; the Lord will stand upon the favoured "Mount of Olives," which will cleave at the touch of His blessed feet. Names are given which must ever withstand the destroying touch of mysticism and spiritualising. The great and blessed day of the Lord will be there—a day unique in its character which shall be in its full brightness when eventide might have been expected! It is "the day which the Lord hath made." No more drought for that privileged land. Healing streams of living waters flow from God's metropolis towards the eastern (margin) or Dead Sea, as well as to the Great Sea! The spared nations shall come up to "the city of the great King," "to worship the King, and to keep the feasts of tabernacles." This feast has never yet

had its antitype, it will receive it in that day. It will be celebrated in the length and breadth of Emmanuel's land, "from the river [Euphrates] to the sea [Mediterranean]" by Israel, "the ransomed of the Lord," and by the Gentiles come "to the brightness of her rising."

"Come, O ye kings! ye nations!
With songs of gladness hail Him,
Ye Gentiles all, before Him fall,
The royal Priest in Salem."

Thus will God make good not only the unconditional promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but He will accomplish His original purpose in anointing David with His holy oil. He will shew that it is not in vain He has said in the most absolute way, and without making *ultimate* blessing to depend upon the faithfulness of David or of his seed, "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." In reality David's throne will be filled by his all-glorious Son and Lord as long as God maintains the sun in the heavens.

But there are wider glories upon earth for the blessed Lord Jesus than those which surround the throne of His father David. We saw in Daniel that "the *Son of man*" receives the kingdom from the Ancient of days and that "the saints of the high (or heavenly) places" take the kingdom. It is in this character that we see the Lord Jesus in Psalm viii. But there it is far more than the righteous and beneficent exercise of power snatched from the hand of the Gentiles. Jehovah, the Lord of Israel, has set His glory above the heavens. This

characterises the reign of the Son of man, already exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. In this higher and wider glory all things that ever came out of the hand of God are put under His feet.

The rejection of Christ as Son of David and Messiah gave morally the occasion of the Lord Jesus being glorified in this wider sphere as Son of man. Thus does God cause "the wrath of man to praise him." Thus He makes the malice and cunning of Satan himself to serve His own ends of wisdom and goodness. In the accomplishment of His most precious counsels—

> "He everywhere hath sway,
> And all things serve His might,
> His every act pure blessing is,
> His path unsullied light."

Never did Satan make a greater mistake than when he led Israel on to the rejection of Christ. Never did God's grace win a greater victory than when Satan seemed to frustrate all His purposes. It is ever thus. The heathen rage for naught, and the people imagine *vain* things. Satan marshals all his forces for his most ruinous, his eternal defeat. Yet how well he seems to succeed!

It was a marvellous display of God's wisdom, and power, and goodness, when He formed man out of the dust, but formed him in His own image, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; when He placed him at the head of that fair and beautiful creation which even God pronounced very good. What wonder that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy!" Lovely scene, but short-lived!

The blessing was made to depend upon the obedience of man at the head of this beautiful display of "His eternal power and Godhead." Man failed utterly when thus placed in responsibility to God at the head of creation. His authority was wide and undisputed, nor was his intelligence less. "The Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof." Instead of ruling this lovely scene for God, man fell himself into sin, and dragged creation with him into "the bondage of corruption." Man was set aside; he was but the ruined and guilty head of a now fallen creation. God turned to "the seed of the woman." His heel was indeed to be bruised by the serpent—the momentary and apparent victory of Satan. But He was to bruise the serpent's head—the real and eternal triumph of the second Man, the Lord from heaven. God's purpose of having man at the head of His creation, and of blessing this beneath the authority of man has only been deferred to be the more gloriously accomplished. The glories of Eden pale before the transcendently lovely scene this earth will present when all that fell with the first man into the bondage of corruption shall be gathered under the hand of the second Man who shall wield His supreme authority for the glory of God and for the blessing of His creatures!

Let us see the use which the Spirit of God makes of Psalm viii. in Hebrews ii. 6: "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of

him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (rather, thing).

How forcibly this present exaltation of Christ as man recalls the beautiful words of Psalm viii., "who hast set thy glory above the heavens." It is more than "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." And the Son of man now crowned with glory and honour, soon to be seen with all that ever came out of the hand of God beneath His feet! This indeed is more than Jehovah's "King upon (his) holy hill of Zion." The rejection of the "King of Israel that cometh in the name of Jehovah" has given occasion to the Son of man glorifying God in the cross. This work, unspeakably and eternally precious to God, the foundation of all blessing for man, has in its turn been the occasion of God glorifying the Son of man in Himself above. The full brightness of the glory of God now shines from the face of the glorified Man above. And when the glory of Jehovah shall shine upon Israel and the earth, it will be in the Person of the glorified Son of man!

Already, beloved, we have found in that exalted and glorified One the answer to every need of the conscience

and a satisfying portion for the heart. His present glory is a triumphant testimony that the work of the cross has fully satisfied a righteous God. A man in the glory of God, and He the One "who loved me and gave himself for me," may well fill the heart "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

But the truth that we "see Jesus crowned with glory and honour" is here used as the assurance our God has given that He will accomplish His grand purpose of having all things in blessing beneath the authority of man, and that man "the Son of man." But for the heart which is taught of God, the sweetest thing in the ultimate accomplishment of this purpose of God is that it will be the fruit of redemption. "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" It was sin that spoiled the fair creation of God, but Christ by the grace of God has tasted death for everything. His work will extend in blessing to the whole creation.

This is brought out in a striking way in Colossians i. 20, "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him, to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were some time alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."

The Lord Jesus has made peace by the blood of His cross. This is the foundation of all gospel testimony. Yet it is but little understood, but very feebly grasped. How often are the dying exhorted to "make their peace with God." It would be easier for them to make heaven and earth! Thank God, they need not seek to make it.

Peace *is* made, and grace—purest heavenly grace—calls the sinner into peace. "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off (Gentiles), and to them that were nigh" (Jews). (Eph. ii. 17.) To both is peace announced. It is *made* "by the blood of his cross," it is *announced* to sinners, Jew or Gentile, by the Lord, and in the word of the gospel. Precious grace! The blood is upon the mercy-seat. It is sprinkled before it, where it meets the eye of God. Of old in Egypt, He said, "when *I* see the blood I will pass over you." His eye ever rests upon it now! And with what satisfaction! What a voice it has for His heart! What a work of obedience and love it tells of! "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." Oh, the precious blood of Christ—the blood of sprinkling before God! It is that which has accomplished the choicest counsels of His heart. It is that which has made possible the outflow of that love which sin, as it were, cast back upon itself. Yea love, which would have had no outlet in a sinless world, has found a free and righteous channel through that precious blood. And fragrant above all to Him the sweet odour of that entire devotion to His will, which led the blessed One whose blood it is, to "pour out His soul unto death!" A death, the contemplation of which—even whilst the light of the Father's countenance still sustained His soul—brought tears to His eyes and sweat, "as it were great drops of blood," to His brow!

Oh did the anxious doubting soul but know the satisfaction God finds in that blood, its fears would cease in the peace that was made by the blood of the cross.

Faith honours God in the very thing in which His heart is most interested. It gives the soul to rest where God rests!

"Whom God hath set forth a propitiation (mercy-seat) through faith in His blood." The righteousness of God rests there, is enthroned there. It is upon a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat! Thence goes forth the message of pardon for the sinner. The guiltiest who bows there as a sinner, finds pardon in the righteousness of God. In His grace? Yes assuredly, in His grace, but in His righteousness as much as in His grace. It is *due* to the work set forth by that blood to pardon the sinner that comes as such to the mercy-seat. *Due*, did I say? Yes due, but not as if pardon were extorted from God. He gave in free and pure grace His only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." And now His heart has unutterable joy in pardoning the sinner. He has the double joy of satisfying His heart of boundless love, and of putting honour upon the work of the Son of His love.

Oh, that souls would but bow to His righteousness and confess themselves utterly and helplessly ruined by sin! How blessedly that righteousness would be *upon* them! If you have not peace with God, my hearer, listen! The blood is upon the mercy-seat, and God receives the sinner as a sinner; washes and cleanses him; He makes him spotlessly white in the blood of the Lamb; PEACE IS MADE.

But that peace is not confined to us who believe in Christ's name. "By him to reconcile all things unto

himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

In Philippians ii., where it is a question of owning the authority of the once self-humbled Jesus, every knee must bow of beings heavenly, earthly, and infernal. All must bow to the name of Jesus. Here it is a question of reconciliation, and hence, heavenly things and earthly things only are mentioned. Infernal things are left out.

In the next verse the Spirit of God speaks of our reconciliation, and in terms of such rich grace that I would fain enlarge upon it. But in the verse upon which we are dwelling, it is entirely a question of reconciling *things*. Thank God, all things in heaven and in earth are yet to be reconciled, and God is to be glorified in all. *The blood of the cross is the foundation of all this blessing.* That blood has been shed and peace is made, but the power that will extend the blessed efficacy of that blood to the whole creation of God, has not yet been exercised.

Let me repeat, for fear of a misunderstanding on so important a matter, that it is not *here* a question of guilty man at all. And, where man is spoken of, it is only those who believe who are ever brought into the peace and favour of God. Scripture is too clear upon this to leave a doubt upon a soul which is subject to it. The righteousness of God, which justifies him that believeth in Jesus, is "*toward* all," because of the blood of the cross: it is "*upon* all them that believe." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

The power of Christ, as the glorified Son of man,

shall extend as far as the reconciling value of His blood. "By him to reconcile all things." "That he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every (thing)."

What a lovely scene this world will present when the Son of man shall have taken the reins of government, and extended His beneficent sway to all that was put under the lordship of man! Nor will the least part of that glory be that He takes the place of supreme authority as the One who suffered unto death, "even the death of the cross," for the glory of God and the redemption of man. "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he descended first into *the lower parts of the earth*? He that descended is the same also that ascended up above all heavens, *that he might fill all things*." The once humbled One, who went down in grace into the dust of death, has gone up where Jehovah has set His glory—"above the heavens." 'Tis thence

> "He shall come down like showers
> Upon the new-mown grass."

How our hearts have, many a time, thrilled at the thought of His present exaltation! Well they may! The One who, here below, was hurried from one unrighteous tribunal to another, is glorified "above all heavens." Before the high priest [usurper, that he was in presence of Him who is indeed the "high priest over the house of God!"] He lifts the veil that hides the future from other eyes, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Miserable tools of Satan to pour upon Him his spite and malice whilst it was in his

power to do it,—"then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" If "his own" treat Him thus, what will the Gentiles do? The Roman governor washes his hands of the more than "innocent" blood he is about to shed! The careless, heartless, unrighteous administrator of power received from God, scourges the Son of God, and delivers Him to be crucified; whilst his soldiers mock Him with an imperial robe and a royal crown. And does that blessed One, "dumb before his shearers," hold their breath in His hand? Blessed Jesus! What patience, what grace is thine! Yet, who shall tell the tenderness of that heart! Who shall say how the heartless mockery and the cruelty that drave the thorns into His holy brow, fell upon that human soul unhardened by sin! May the shoes be off our feet, my brethren, while treading such holy ground! "I *gave* my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I *hid not* my face from shame and spitting."

And Herod in his turn, how does he use the long-desired opportunity of seeing the Lord Jesus? "And Herod, with his men of war, set him at naught and mocked him and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him again to Pilate."

What a scene for the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ to look down upon! What a scene for God manifest in the flesh to pass through! But His patient grace treads the whole path of humiliation and obedience till, "made sin for us," God forsakes Him. "Thou art holy" is

the blessed sound that reaches God in His sanctuary from the very place of judgment, and from the One who suffers for sin,—"cast out of thy sight." But all is over now. The highest place in heaven is filled by the One who "made himself of no reputation." All heaven bows reverently before Him, whom the creatures of His hand mocked and scourged and crucified.

And if heaven has already been the scene of divinest honours to the lowly Son of man, the earth will ere long witness the honours God designs for the man of His counsels. He, who has set His glory above the heavens, has prepared the widest glories for the One who has glorified Him on the earth, and these, in the very scene of all His shame and sorrow. Their earthly centre will be the city that resounded with "Away with him! Crucify him, crucify him." To that metropolis, "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall bow down before him: all nations shall serve him."

"Outstretched His wide dominion,
O'er river, sea and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar."

All creation, long the scene of God's dishonour, long subject to vanity, shall "praise the name of the Lord." The curse will be lifted from this world now so polluted, now so suffering. "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God (says the faithful remnant of Israel) shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

In Ephesians i. 10, the Spirit of God is pleased to give perhaps the highest expression to be found in scripture of the amazing truth which is before us this evening. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Nothing then could be clearer than that it is God's purpose to gather all things in earth as well as in heaven under the headship of Christ. When this purpose is accomplished, the blessed and glorious end of all God's ways will be manifested. Hence the period when effect is given to this precious counsel of wisdom and grace, is called "the dispensation (or administration) of the fulness of times." All the mysterious ways of God's providence will then have accomplished their end. All His dealings with man in his responsibility will have reached their appointed term. The perfection of His direct and openly manifested government will then be seen. The *fulness* of times will be come.

What precious grace, my brethren, that our God should make known to us these wondrous counsels for the glory of Christ! Had we no personal share in them we should surely value them deeply because Christ is their blessed object. He is surely everything for us. We owe all to Him, and He has won our hearts by His own unspeakable grace. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." These priceless counsels are for *His*

glory. God has purposed it that Christ shall be glorified in the whole extent of His path of grace. He has already glorified Him as Son of man "above all heavens." He will glorify Him where He lived in poverty, where He had not where to lay His head, and where He gave His life a ransom for all. As He, in grace, went down below all that God has created, He has been raised as man above all that is created. All between those depths and these heights, *all* must own His authority, all must be gathered beneath Him as head over all things. This is unspeakable joy to us. "That they may behold my glory" is the deep breathing of His heart who counts that the sight will fill our souls with satisfaction and delight!

But, thank God! we have our part. A little lower down in this chapter, the apostle speaks of "the glory of his inheritance in the saints." When all the universe of God shall be gathered under the hand of Christ, God's rich and glorious inheritance will be manifested. But He will possess it "in the saints."

We saw the other evening, from Romans viii., that we are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." When He is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory. And at this "manifestation of the sons of God" creation is brought "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." It is thus in "the heirs of God," that He will hold the inheritance. How perfectly then we shall share with Christ all the glory of His vast dominion!

But our chapter shews that our place with Christ, as regards this glorious inheritance, is yet closer and more

intimate. In verses 21 to 23, we see Christ raised "far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (age) but in that which is to come;" and that God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." So that, as the glorified man set in the highest place of authority, he will be the head of the church. He is such already; but when He is thus glorified, the church will be manifested as His body.

When the first man was placed at the head of an unfallen creation, and all things in it were put in subjection under him, Eve, bone of his bone, was associated with him, or rather was united to him. The woman was the "help meet for him." He did not reign over her, although, undoubtedly, he was the head, but she reigned with him.

The second Man too has a bride. She is "bone of his bone;" she is one with Him. The scene of His reign will not be less glorious assuredly, because He shares His throne with the one whom the richest grace of God has formed a "help meet for" Him! Purest grace—but grace in its highest glory!

"See, on the throne beside Him,
O'er all her foes victorious,
His royal bride, for whom He died,
Like Him for ever glorious."

Under another beautiful figure the Lord Jesus is the head, and the church is the body. "So also is Christ," says the apostle, speaking of *both* head and members.

In the administration of the fulness of times, when the blessed Man of God's counsels takes His place at the head of all the universe of God, the church will share all His glory, all His authority. God has given Him "head over all things *to the church* which is his body!" We shall see more of this next week, if the Lord will.

Let us consider one or two aspects of the reign of Christ, Son of David and Son of man. We have seen Israel restored to their land and blessed beneath the sway of the Lord Jesus. We have seen the new covenant made with them. We have heard the Lord say, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" "they shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more." Unmistakable evidence has been before us that they will be at the head of the nations, that they will form the great centre round which these will rally. It would be impossible to learn anything about the millennium without recognising this great truth.

Consider, for a moment, a passage which has already been quoted, Isaiah ii. There consequent upon the terrible judgments exercised upon Judah and Jerusalem, "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains . . . . and all nations shall flow unto it." Here, the Lord's house, evidently, at Jerusalem, is the rallying-point of all nations. Hear what they say: "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for *out of Zion* shall go forth the law, and the word of the

Lord *from Jerusalem*." Jerusalem, then, is the great centre of the earth. And not only so, the knowledge of God goes out from the land of Israel, where "all know the Lord," to the nations around.

What grace is here, my brethren! and what precious fruits it will yield for the God of *all* grace! How often in our reading and meditation have we felt the keenest disappointment, as the sweet sounds of Miriam's timbrel died out, to find ourselves amid the murmurings of Marah. How often the heart has sunk heavy within us as we have found the majestic tones of the song of Moses succeeded by base cries for the flesh-pots, by the chiding of Meribah, and the temptation of Massah! After this we have become sadly prepared for Israel's grievous response to the grace of which even Balaam is forced to tell. And yet it would be unbelief to doubt that Balaam has spoken of glory for Israel, which has never yet broken upon them in the beams of "the star of Jacob." But alas for the people!

Yet God leads them in triumph through the Jordan. Forty years of Massahs and Meribahs without number have not exhausted the patience and grace of Him who would "bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." As they plant their feet upon the bed of the Jordan, dried when it overflowed its banks, the shoes in which they had passed the depths of the Red Sea forty years before are not worn out. Surely at last God's good purposes will be accomplished, and He will be glorified in the people

before whom "all the inhabitants of Canaan" already "melt away!" Am I not relating the experience of hundreds when I say that it has been pain and disappointment to read the sad sequel in the sin, and shame, and suffering of the book of Judges?

Who has not felt the same sadness and regret in the fading rays of the glorious throne of Solomon? The passing gleams of gracious revivals in days like those of Jehoshaphat, of Hezekiah, and of Josiah, only make more evident the ever thickening darkness until Nebuchadnezzar succeeds to the last royal Son of David—*except one!* And is there no relief to the grief and disappointment with which we trace the history of a people that cannot but interest and move our hearts because they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes?" Yes indeed, thank God! But not until the palaces of Zion shall echo the triumphant and melodious song for a greater than Solomon: "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." Then harps, no longer hung upon the willows, shall be tuned to the sweet songs of Zion, and we shall hear their peaceful and joyous strains in the height of our heavenly abode.

Then "out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Reversal of the sad testimony—"the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you!" Fruit of sovereign grace! "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen!"

But not only shall the knowledge of Jehovah spread

to all the nations from Jerusalem, but the Lord's government shall extend thence over the whole world. (Ver. 4.) "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Blessed result of the Lord's direct government! Time was when most Christians believed that the gospel was to bring about this time of universal and uninterrupted peace. Such a hope must, by this time, have become a forlorn one. A little more than a quarter of a century ago, many excellent and pious people, in this country, thought that partly by the gospel and partly by the cultivation of the arts of peace, we were on the eve of such an enduring peace. If the trumpet of earth's jubilee had not actually sounded, it needed but a few more steps in the direction happily discovered, and its long sighed-for blast would resound, first in Christendom, and then throughout the world. And has it been peace since 1851? Never such stupendous wars! Am I told that these expectations were not founded entirely upon efforts to spread the gospel, but chiefly upon efforts more or less carnal? I am willing to admit it. But were not the two things associated in many minds? Let the "missionary" and "evangelical" sermons of that day answer. And is the preaching of the gospel bringing about universal peace? Will it do so? Appearances, it must be admitted, are against it. Still, if scripture taught it, faith would wait for it in spite of all appearances. But does it? And where? No! scripture uniformly makes

universal peace to depend, as in this passage, upon the direct government of the Prince of Peace, a reign which again is always introduced *by judgment.*

There is a striking instance of this in Psalm xlvi., where the gospel is never named nor hinted at. In the first three verses is recorded the mighty shaking of the powers and nations of earth which brings in Messiah's reign. The streams of blessing are found in the capital of His kingdom, for God is there. Verse 6 corresponds with what we saw in Zechariah. It is the Lord roaring out of Zion which scatters the heathen and shakes the kingdoms. It is not the still small voice of the gospel. That it is judgments, and terrible ones, which bring in the blessing, is shewn in verse 8: "what desolations he hath made in the earth." Is this the gospel too?

But what is the result of the direct intervention of the Lord when "he uttered his voice" and "the earth melted?" What is the effect of the desolations His judgments leave in the earth? "*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth*; he breaketh the bow," &c. Do we need the word "*Be still*, and know that *I* am God; I will be exalted among the heathen?" He will vindicate the honour of His name, and it is ours to "be still" and see it. All the agitation of man; all his activity and his societies; even his preaching the gospel, will never "make wars to cease." But God will, "when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Read prayerfully Isaiah ii. 10–22.

It would give me real pain if any of you were to gather from these remarks that I undervalue evangelization.

For myself it is a service I love, and I "covet earnestly" more of its true spirit;—

"With cries, entreaties, tears to save"

the precious souls that are rushing down to endless woe. But the purpose of God in sending out the glad tidings of His grace, is to reconcile *souls* to Himself and to gather out a people for His praise and for the glory of Christ. This gospel of grace is "the power of God unto *salvation* unto every one that *believeth*." But never is it presented as God's means of bringing in deliverance for creation. Never is it said to be God's purpose to convert the world by it. But countless scriptures shew that such is not His purpose. To bring in the period of universal peace and blessing and to deliver creation, the personal intervention of the Lord will be needed. He will do it all at His coming. May we, my brethren, whilst waiting for Him, be diligent in seeking to win souls for Him, that they may share His glory, and better still share His heart. May the grace of the heart of God that rejoices "over one sinner that repenteth," fill our souls! May the love of Christ constrain us!

The blessing of the Gentiles as such, must ever be through Israel. During the present interval in the ways of God, as regards the earth, Gentiles are not being blessed as such. The blessing of those Gentiles who believe the gospel, is that they cease to be such and become members of Christ—"where there is neither Greek nor Jew."

But when the body of Christ is complete, this interval will cease, and God will take up the thread of His ways

with Israel where it was broken off by the rejection of Christ. Then "they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." (Isa. lxi. 4.) And what of the Gentiles? "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." And again, verse 9, "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

Thus we find that not only will Israel's place be one of supremacy, as regards the Gentiles, but it will be one of greater nearness to God. This is His purpose, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." "To you which are afar off [Gentiles] and to them that were nigh." Israel's place in the earth is near to God. She forfeited it a thousand times over and rejected the only One capable of really establishing her in it. God cut off His relations with Israel on the ground of her responsibility to re-establish them upon the ground of His sovereign grace and the value of the blood of Christ. He stopped His reckoning of time and displaced the centre of His earthly ways, "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation;" but, boundless mercy! only "to do thee good in thy latter end." In grace and through the work of Christ, this beloved people shall be the centre of all blessing upon earth. They shall be in

such nearness to God as to be named "priests of Jehovah" by those who, blessed though they be, shall be at a comparative distance.

If you will read at your leisure Isaiah lx., you will have a lovely picture of the millennial blessing of the Zion which is now "forsaken and hated." The relations of the Gentiles with the beloved and now glorious people of God will be made very evident to you. "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of the strangers shall build thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee." Again, "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." Nor will it be a hardship, for "I will also make thy officers *peace*, and thine exactors *righteousness*. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls *Salvation*, and thy gates *Praise*."

The result of Israel's nearness to God will be the blessing—spiritual and material blessing of the surrounding nations. Zechariah viii. 22, 23, shews this very clearly, as do many other passages. "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard

that God is with you." What a gracious contrast to the "Lo-ammi" now written upon Israel! And what a contrast to all we see around us! The Jew in unbelief, a bye-word in the earth; his Zion that should be "the joy of the whole earth" trodden down by the Gentiles who lord it over him, sometimes with much gentleness, but often with terrible cruelty!

But God is about to give Jerusalem a new name, a name which will characterize the work of His gracious hand. Name of purest unchanging blessing, "The Lord is there." Upon His beloved people there He will "sprinkle clean water." "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."

Not only will it then be an honour to be a Jew, but God in their midst will be sought by those who have not called upon His name. Thus will the children of Israel, "*a people near unto him,*" be the channel of blessing to the nations; accomplishing the gracious promise of God, "I will bless thee and make thy name great; and *thou shalt be a blessing:* and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Genesis xii. 2.

No wonder then that many nations shall seek the Lord in Jerusalem! He has made the place of His feet glorious and the nations flock to it. For Satan who has so long enslaved them will have been bound (Rev.

xx.), and the kingdom-of-the-world of our Lord and of His Christ will have come. (Rev. xi.) God will have remembered "His holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our (Israel's) father Abraham . . . . that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life." These unconditional promises, this solemn oath, will only have full effect when "all the families of the earth" (*as* "families of the earth," and not merely as individuals) are blessed in Israel and in the Seed.

In Zechariah xiv. where we have already seen the reign of Christ begin by His appearing on the Mount of Olives, we learn not only the blessings for Israel of that day "known to the Lord," but circumstantial instruction with regard to the Gentiles in the millennium. "And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Thank God that this chapter utterly defies the withering breath of spiritualising which would dry up every stream of divine grace, except its mighty current in the blessing of the church, and in its unworthy selfishness limits even this! The spared nations, instead of being "dogs" as of old, "common or unclean" as even Peter would have it, shall keep with Israel the last great millennial feast.

You will already have remarked that it is not a *perfect* condition we are considering, although God's government will be seen in its perfection. For an absolutely perfect

condition, in which all shall answer to the nature of God, we must wait for the "new heavens" and "new earth." In this very chapter we find it is possible that a nation may neglect to go up to keep the feast. There will be immediate judgment in that day upon anything calling for judgment. This is a characteristic feature of the day of Christ's reign. "Because," says the Preacher, (Ecc. viii. 11,) "sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The reverse of this will obtain in the millennium. To obey will then be as easy as, alas! it is difficult now. It will be to go *with* the stream, as now it is to go against it. Satan will have been bound. The many temptations to sin which he now uses will not exist. Yet, if sin should manifest itself it will meet with speedy punishment. "The sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." Isaiah lxv. 20.

Judgment will be "executed speedily" upon disobedience and the family of the earth which shall fail to go up to Jerusalem to keep the feast shall be deprived of rain. So explicit is this teaching that Egypt, which does not depend upon rain, is specified, and a plague is there substituted for drought.

As for Israel in the centre of the blessed scene, the bells of the horses shall bear the inscription which of old was reserved for the High Priest's mitre, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." "Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." Precious fruits of God's grace! How His heart will rejoice in the fruits of His patience—in the magnifying

of His "gifts and calling" which are "without repentance." Well might the sweet Psalmist of Israel sing, in anticipation of the day we are considering, "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!" Psalm cxliv. 15.

On a former occasion the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption by the Lord's manifestation with His saints was touched upon. In Isaiah xi. we have in a few magnificent verses a description of the results of this deliverance. This ought to be very precious to us, my brethren, not only as the wiping-out of the sorrow brought upon creation by man's sin, but also as one of the many fruits of the death of Christ. Peter speaks of "the sufferings of Christ and the glories (pl. in Greek) that should follow." Who shall fathom the depths of those sufferings? Who shall tell their worth? And who but God shall say how many and how varied the glories which He has prepared to follow them? Here are some of them. The heart that knows Christ cannot spare any of them. We who owe all to His death cannot but hail them all. "Thou art worthy!"

"That He by the grace of God should taste death for every (thing)." "By him to reconcile all things to himself." "For he hath put all things under his feet." Thus will the counsels of God for the glory of Christ be accomplished. Thus will God answer worthily the work of the cross. "But we see not yet all things put under him;" Christ is hidden in God. Our life is hidden there, for He is our life. "When Christ who is our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) We cannot too often revert to

this most important, most blessed landmark in our present inquiry. From Romans viii. we have learned that this manifestion is the signal for the emancipation of creation. (See Lecture 3.) We shall now find this enjoyment on the part of creation of "the liberty of the glory of the children of God" is one striking and most blessed feature of the Lord's reign.

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." You see how clear it is that the Lord reigns as man, "Ancient of Days," "God over all" though in His glorious person He be. "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

Connect this with what we read about the destruction of the wicked one—the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians ii., and you will see clearly that this day of blessing is introduced by judgment. It is always so. It is never said nor implied that the gospel brings it in. But I do not know a passage in which this day of earth's blessing is spoken of without its introduction being more or less directly connected with God's judgments. Besides, how could the preaching of the gospel change the fierce nature

of the wolf or leopard, the lion or bear? Assuredly "it shall accomplish that which *I* please (says the Lord) and prosper in the thing whereto *I* sent it." But it is sent as a testimony to a Saviour given in grace, refused on earth, glorified in heaven, that it may win souls for His name. When it shall be a question of submitting creation to His sway, His power and glory will not fail in the task. But He will accomplish it "by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning."

"And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Here, then, the light comes to its full brightness. Creation is delivered as, we have seen, at the Lord's manifestation with His saints. And now it

"Rests in undisturbed repose"

beneath the sway of the Son of Man. The curse which has been upon it because of man's sin is lifted from the creation of God. "The earth yields her increase." No more "groaning" for creation! No more "travailing in pain!" No more raging passions of men! No more

cruelty to the beasts once put under his protection! No more thorns and thistles instead of "her increase" from the earth! No more pestilence; no more famine; no more sickness; no more death, unless a direct judgment upon open rebellion. To enter into the blessing of God for the earth, to enjoy it really, people will need to be born again; but what abundant outpouring of the Spirit! Entire absence too of Satan's temptation!

> "Joy to the ransom'd nations!
> The foe, the ravening lion,
> Is bound in chains while Jesus reigns
> King of the earth in Zion."

The blessed Lord, who as the Lamb of God has *virtually* borne away the sin of the world, will make effectual that blessed work by "the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." (Phil. iii. 21.) He will sit upon His throne in the power of "his own blood;" by which all things will have been reconciled. The peace which has been made by the blood of His cross will be extended to the whole "habitable world to come whereof we speak."

Peace will characterise the Lord's reign. He is called the "Prince of peace," a title which refers to the period we are considering. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isa. ix. 7.) "The mountains shall bring forth peace to the people and the little hills by righteousness."

"Universal peace" will be established, and thank God, it will be abiding.

For righteousness characterises the reign of Christ equally with peace. The two are connected in more than one of the passages I have just quoted. The Lord is looked upon here as a man serving God in power and glory, as He served Him in suffering and shame. "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." Worthy fulfilment of that which David sang, "The ruler among men, the just one, the ruler in God's fear, and he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

Cloudless morning indeed, when all the glory of David's house shall be hung upon the shoulders of His all-glorious Son! Cloudless morning, when the second Man shall surround His throne with a brighter scene than Eden ever presented!—a scene, too, which shall owe its beauty and its stability to the blood of the everlasting covenant!

No wonder that that lovely scene is called the dispensation of the *fulness of times*. God's government is at length seen in its perfection, and in the hands of man. It is not a circle of times which has brought us back to the garden of Eden, and the first man in his responsibility. It is the *fulness* of times in which all things upon earth have been rescued from the power of the enemy and the trail of the serpent. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." What a lovely sight when, as the fruit of the cross, and the result of all things being subjected to the last Adam,

"the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den!"

More glorious far, assuredly, than Eden! and it will be lasting! For "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." "And wisdom and knowledge shall be *the stability* of thy times, and strength of salvation. . . . . Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down: not one of the stakes thereof shall *ever be removed*, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. . . . . For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us . . . . and the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isaiah xxxiii.

The teaching of Revelation xx. I can only, at this late hour, refer you to. Yet it is of the utmost importance. The Spirit of God there gives us the duration of the Lord's earthly reign. It will be, as you all know, a thousand years. Hence the word millennium, which only indicates the duration here specified, but which is a most convenient word for expressing that favoured and blessed period, the sabbath of creation. The binding of Satan gives a character to the millennium of immense consequence.

Before the *perfect* blessing of the eternal state Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. Into the "new heaven and the new earth" he will never enter. These will answer to and express the perfection of God's being. Satan's punishment in the lake of fire will precede this

final and unmingled blessing, when "God" shall "be all in all." But even for the full manifestation of God's ways in government, that that government may be seen in its perfection in "the administration of the fulness of times," Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit.

Let me, my brethren, commend to your earnest and prayerful study the passages which have been brought before you, and those you will find connected with them in the word of God. To those of you who are but little familiar with them I would say, you will find your acquaintance with our own blessing as Christians much increased by clearly seeing the calling of Israel, and the manifestation of God's ways in connection with this people and with the Gentiles. The confusion of the calling of Israel with that of the church has done much to ruin the testimony of God by the church in this world. If, as we have seen, the church is being called out during an interval in the ways of God with Israel, an interval, the duration of which is nowhere reckoned in scripture; if the wheels of time, according to God's wise and gracious calculation of it, are stopped whilst the bride is being gathered out for the heavenly Bridegroom, then indeed is the church a thing apart from the course of earthly events, a heavenly body, with a heavenly character, calling, and hope.

If it be so—and so it is—God's earthly dealings when the church has been called up link themselves directly with those before God disowned His house and people at Jerusalem. In other words, the seventieth week of Daniel morally follows the sixty-ninth. There *is* a break, but as time is not reckoned at all, that break has no

revealed duration. For Israel under law there is one week yet. Then Messiah will come in power and glory, and Israel, received on the ground of mercy, will form a new "generation," and "the age that is to come" will run its peaceful and blessed course.

But Israel's rejection of Messiah has given occasion to the wider glories of the Son of man; and all glory for man, earthly or heavenly, has been secured by "the Son of man" being "lifted up,"—secured by "the blood of his cross."

Moreover, God's grace has profited by Satan's malice, and man's sin in rejecting Christ, to gather out the church to share the dominion and glory of the second Man, as His cherished bride; yea, even to form the body of Christ.

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . . For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Let me, in closing, address a word to any who are not in Christ. The choice for you is not between heavenly glory and blessing upon earth. Oh no! If you will but take your place before God as a guilty sinner, to taste His rich mercy in Christ, your blessing shall be oneness with the glorified Christ before God. You will be linked to Christ in heaven now, and reign with Him when He reigns. But if you refuse Christ, if you neglect "so great salvation," there is no place for you in the earthly any more than in the heavenly glory; you will be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Oh, flee from the wrath to come!

But if the subject before us is not for you who have no link with the Christ whom God is about to glorify in the scene of His shame and sorrow, yet have there been this evening words of precious grace for your ear, if indeed it is opened to receive them. The "blood on the mercy-seat" should surely be a word for you! The "peace made by the blood of the cross" may well speak to your heart of divinest grace treasured in Christ, and to your conscience of purifying before God, and of peace with Him! Oh, will you bow to the cleansing power of that precious blood? What efficacy! It can set the guiltiest conscience in the stainless light of God's presence, "clean every whit." Precious blood of Christ! And what grace that He should have come so low for the guilty, polluted children of men! *Have you ever thanked Him?* Oh, the dark ingratitude of a human soul that has never bowed before a once suffering, and now glorified, Saviour with tears of love and thankfulness! Down at His feet by faith, I entreat you! Let His love melt your heart. Let His blood purge your conscience. Nothing else can meet your desperate case. Will you not own it before His footstool? Will you not confess yourself so guilty before God, that nothing but the blood of Christ can meet you—*nothing*! That no effort of your own, no good works that you can produce, if indeed you could produce any—no tears of yours—that *nothing* will avail but the work of Christ? But that is enough for God. "Deliver him from going down to the pit, *I have found a ransom.*" It is enough for faith, however guilty the conscience, however sin-stricken the soul! Oh, may it be enough for *you*,

enough whilst you are bowed in earnest confession of sin, in true repentance before God! May He vouchsafe it!

God grant that every one within these walls to-night may be seen in the glory of Christ when He comes as the Sun shining in his strength! Amen.

"THEY SHALL NOT HURT NOR DESTROY IN ALL MY HOLY MOUNTAIN: FOR THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA."

LECTURE VI.

"THE GLORY WHICH THOU GAVEST ME, I HAVE GIVEN THEM."

> "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Read John xvii. 20–23.

How precious the grace, my brethren, which has called us in to listen to the blessed Lord as He pours out the desires of His heart before the Father! What grace that we should be present, as it were, when at the close of His earthly path of service and rejection, the Lord unfolds His heart in the peace of that holy presence from which He never went out! The Lord does not speak *to* us, nor to the privileged eleven who actually surrounded Him. He pours out His soul into the Father's ear. And we are allowed to listen! The utterance of the deepest desires, of the most earnest longings, of the most intimate feelings; the unfoldings of the most precious interests; the breathings of the closest, most peaceful, divinest communion—and we are admitted! Oh for hearts to value more deeply this distinguished favour! Oh for souls to profit by it!

The Lord has trodden the whole path the will of God had appointed. He has finished the work the Father gave Him to do. He takes His place beyond the cross, He speaks as if all were done. The reason is very simple, but full of grace for us. On the one hand what He would say to the Father is as returning to Him having finished the work and perfectly glorified the One who sent Him. He returns to the Father, presenting the work finished and glorious as it is, to take the place of glory which He has won, and which indeed was His before the world was. But on the other hand He would speak thus to the Father whilst still with the disciples, "These things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." What love passing knowledge dwells in that heart with which our God has united us for eternity!

The Lord, then, had fully glorified the Father; He had made Him known in a world of sin; He had finished the work which the Father had given Him to do. The glory with which He was now to be glorified was but the righteous answer to such a work. Besides the perfection of His work, there was the glory of His person! What grounds for the glorifying with the Father above of the Son who had come down here in grace!

There are glories in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ which belong to Him alone. "The glory as of the only-begotten of the Father," His own eternal Godhead glory, none can ever share with Him. But there is a glory which the Lord has *received*, which He can impart, and which, in fact, He does share with the

saints. The glory He had with the Father before the world was, He never received, and it would be impossible to impart it. But the glory which is given to Him as the Servant of God's counsels, as the glorifier of His name, as the accomplisher of redemption, of this He says, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them."

In the last lecture we saw that "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Wondrous, indeed, is that exaltation, only less wondrous, assuredly, than that stupendous descent which was its occasion.

It is our blessed privilege to-night to see the church with Christ, in the day of glory, sharing all the glory that He has won, as the fruit of His obedience unto death. We shall see the church possessing with the Lord all the glory which He has received, as the one who glorified God in this world, and glorified Him right down to death, even the death of the cross; thus glorifying Him with regard to the whole question of sin by which God has been so dishonoured.

If you will turn, with me, to John xii. 23, we shall find a very clear and blessed testimony to the glory He has brought to God, and to its results. "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." At your leisure I beg you to read this portion in its connection. You will see more fully the exquisite beauty of that which is brought before us here. There is, in the record of this chapter, every element of the outward glory of Christ, only, alas! in an external way. Lazarus was sitting at the table as the

one whom the power of the Lord had called out of the tomb. If the Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead—if He were the resurrection and the life, as, indeed, He is—He could also raise Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they might have their place in the kingdom. The power of resurrection was there; a power which is absolutely necessary to bring in the kingdom upon earth. Moreover, "much people of the Jews" believed in the Lord Jesus Christ because of the irresistible evidence of this miracle to the glory of His person. Immediately following this we find (verse 12) that, as Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, the multitude "took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." There was manifestly the outward recognition of the claims of Christ as the Messiah of Israel. This recognition will be accomplished one day in power, in deep reality; but then it was a momentary impulse. It was a very right impulse; but an impulse given by the irresistible evidence of a miracle, or by God's providential dealings, or even by His word if merely in unregenerate nature—an impulse of the flesh —whether right or wrong, is really of no value before God. The same individuals who cried, "Hosanna to the son of David," may have cried, but a few days later, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" "His blood be on us and on our children." There is a day coming when Israel, renewed by grace, will receive their Messiah with godly sorrow and deep repentance, that they have refused and crucified Him. Their sorrow will be turned to joy as they cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in

the name of Jehovah." The Son and Lord of David is the One who will come in the name of Jehovah to accomplish "the promises made unto the fathers." He will come too as Son of man, to make good the government of God in this world. He will come to shew, in a time of perfect blessing for the earth, what that government is in contrast with all that which has been seen in man; for everything committed to the responsibility of man, has failed in his hands. *All* will be made good in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The king then is acknowledged in His own capital. One would naturally say, "He is about to take the throne of His father David, according to the prophecies which have been given; He is going to reign over Israel at once." The people exclaim, "Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." "And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy king cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." Here, then, was the accomplishment of scripture. The Messiah was there; and, for the moment, He was owned.

Moreover, "there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast." "The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." (Ver. 20.) The Gentiles then are found to render homage to the Son of man, whose kingdom, according to the prophets, was to include them. "That all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away." (Dan. vii. 14.) What then is wanting? There is the

power of resurrection which has vanquished death and triumphed over corruption. The king is there and the king *owned*. He has made His triumphal entry into His capital, and the Gentiles have come to the Light of Israel and to "the Son of man," whose glorious reign is to be the blessing of all nations. "The hour is come," says the Lord, "that the Son of man should be glorified."

Last week we saw something of the wide-spread glories of the Son of man. We found, from the book of Daniel (chap. vii.) that, when the Son of man receives the kingdom from the Ancient of days, He comes in the clouds of heaven. This really tells the tale of His rejection, for His glory above, as Son of man, is God's answer to His rejection upon earth. Oh, what a path was before the Lord! How well He saw it all, although outwardly, and for a moment all seemed to tell of immediate glory!

But there was another question—a deeply solemn one—which came before the Lord in all its intensity now that, to other eyes, everything might seem ready for the kingdom. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Were the Lord Jesus Christ to enter, at once, the glory which was His due, He must enter it alone. Not one of the sons or daughters of Adam could have joined the blessed Lord; for sin had not been put away, and sin existed before God until it was put away. Even God's long-suffering in Old Testament times—every pardon which God had accorded—all the blessing in individual souls that He had given—all hung upon the death of

the Lord Jesus Christ. But that death had not been effected. The awful question of sin was an unsettled question. How solemnly present was this to Him who said, elsewhere, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.) His death was necessary for the accomplishment of all the gracious counsels of God. It was needed if fruit were to be borne for God—if those, whom He had chosen in purposes of grace, were to share the glory of Christ.

As for the Lord Himself, He might enter into glory. Was it divine glory? He was in it of right and by the majesty of His very being. Was it the glory of the Son of David? Such He was and owned of God as such (Luke i. 32), and acknowledged by men. (Matt. xxi. 9.) Was it the glory of the Son of man? He was such; and as faithful in this character as the first man had been unfaithful. Spotlessly pure and absolutely perfect in every relation, why should not He "enter into his glory?" Because in His grace He would not go into glory alone. Neither you, nor I, nor any of the elect of God could have joined the Lord Jesus Christ. Not one single sinner from this earth could have sat with Him on His throne, or shared with Him the glory which, indeed, was now to be won by the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, to bear much fruit.

And now this solemn question of death being presented to His soul, we find, in verse 27, something of what it cost Him. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify

How refreshing it would be to linger over the Father's answer and the blessed chain of truth which follows! But we must pass on. Verse 32, however, requires a passing notice: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." As the crucified One lifted up between a dishonoured God and a now judged world, He was to be the centre of attraction for the souls of men. It was no longer a question of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" only. He would draw all men unto Him. Thus would He make good in suffering grace, His title of "Son of Man." He died for Israel, as we have already seen from the prophecy of Caiaphas. He died also "to gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad;" that is, He laid the foundation for the formation of the church of God. Wider still spread the glorious fruits of His being lifted up, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every (thing)." Yes, as the one who went down to death—as the Son of Man who was "lifted up" on the cross that God might be glorified, He laid the foundation for the accomplishment of all His counsels of grace. There is not a single glory to come for earth or heaven which does not spring from the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without that cross, God could not have been glorified in this world. God might have blotted the whole polluted scene from before His eyes; but where would His glory have been as a God of perfect love as well as perfect light? And what of that heart which *must* pour itself out in purest, perfect grace? The Lord Jesus undertook the solemn work and finished it. He made it righteous for God to pardon. Through His

work God is just in justifying the sinner. The foundation is laid for all the glory of God, whether as regards this world or in heaven. For the kingdom of God, when it is established in power, will have two parts—a heavenly and an earthly. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." The Father's kingdom is the heavenly part of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of the Son of man is also the kingdom of God, but it has its scene upon earth. All the glory and blessing of the kingdom, both in its heavenly and earthly spheres, hangs upon the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. What would that Father's kingdom have been without the death of the Lord Jesus? The heaven of heavens could never have borne such a title, for foot of man could never have trodden its hallowed courts. Thank God! He *would* people it with men redeemed from a sinful and rebellious world—with those who should find their eternal joy in the knowledge of Himself, in the intelligent enjoyment of His Being, and in the peaceful worship of His immediate presence. And the Son of man would at all costs make good these counsels of grace—His name be praised!

And what would the kingdom upon earth have been? No kingdom of God at all, but the earth swept "with the besom of destruction;" because God cannot bear sin and will not pass over it. He is infinitely holy, and cannot endure it. He is infinitely righteous, and must punish it.

In the next chapter (xiii. verse 31) the Lord unfolds this wondrous truth of His glorifying God in the cross with a clearness and a beauty all divine: "Now is the

Son of man glorified." What glory is this, beloved friends? It is the glory—the moral glory of the cross. However feebly our hearts enter into it, there never was such true glory in this world as that which we are here permitted to contemplate. But to contemplate it worthily, according to God, we need the present action and power of the Holy Ghost. We need a bowed head, a subject heart, unshod feet. It is holy ground.

It is no longer a question of *outward* glory. It is a deeper glory than the manifestation of the Lord's power and authority. The Son of man approaches the cross, where all the hatred of man culminates, and where the whole malicious energy of Satan, who, through man's sin, wields the power of death, spends itself upon Him. And what is still more solemn—infinitely more awful for the blessed Lord, there is the righteous judgment of God against sin. The blessed Lord, as Son of man, meets the whole question of sin, and meets it *alone*. For who could stand with Him? Any other man would have sunk to everlasting woe beneath the weight of his own sins, not to speak of the sin beneath which other guilty and polluted creatures lay. No creature of God, however free from sin, could have shared with the blessed Lord a work so mighty and so overwhelming. The Son of man is *alone* in presence of man's rebellion against God, and the righteous judgment of God upon it. He alone was equal to the terrible task, but, blessed be His name! He was equal to it. It was His glory to settle for ever the question of sin, according to the righteous judgment of God.

Forsaken of God, the blessed Son of man glorifies

Him. For God receives from Him an adequate answer to all the dishonour of His name in this world of sin. He receives more—infinitely more! The first man trampled God's authority beneath his feet, and filled the earth, committed to his care, with corruption and violence, and rebellion against God. The second Man—the Son of man—glorified God in the very scene of His dishonour, and glorified Him with regard to that dishonour. In Him God has received infinitely more honour than His name ever suffered dishonour in this sad world of sin. Well may our hearts bow in worship! "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

"Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,
Slain in His victory!"

"And God is glorified in him." There is not an attribute of God which does not here shine forth in all its brightness. There is not a way of His which is not magnified here. His very nature is manifested in its perfection, there where the Son of man is crucified through weakness, where He is "made a curse for us!"

Where do we read the love of God as in that cross where "the Son of man" is "lifted up" and where He dies in the sinner's stead? And where but there does that hitherto pent-up love of His heart find an outlet? But "God is light." How brightly that light shines in the cross! The holiness that cannot endure sin,—the righteousness that must punish it—that punishes it even on the Son of His love when He has taken the sinner's place—how clear their brightness! The majesty of God,

how is it vindicated and expressed! His truth long and daringly impugned has found at length, and not till now, its adequate expression. His word is magnified above all His name.

What a work is this, my brethren! And the *Son of man* has wrought it. "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." With what satisfaction did God thus come into the scene where the Son of man had glorified Him down to, and in, the dust of death! It was His righteousness and His good pleasure that glorified the blessed Lord in Himself above. There is a day of glory coming, as we have seen in chapter xii., but God would not wait for that day to answer a work so glorious, accomplished at a cost so unutterable.

The corn of wheat, falling into the ground and dying, has borne much fruit. Yea, and fruits varied as those of the tree of life! We have already seen some of the precious fruits of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen the peace He made by the blood of His cross extend to all things, "whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Last week we considered the dispensation of the fulness of times, when all shall be gathered under the headship of Christ, and found it one of the choice and fragrant fruits of the cross—a part of "the glories" to follow.

But for the cloudless day of glory, now not far distant, thank God! He has not waited to glorify the Son of man. The excellent glory has received the "despised and rejected of men." God has exalted to His own right hand the One who "set his face like a

flint" for the glory of God, and who never turned aside till the cry "It is finished," and the grave of Joseph attest that His "obedience unto death" has reached its full term. Worthy exaltation of the worthy accomplisher of all God's will!

> "Thy holy head, once bound with thorns,
> The crown of glory now adorns;
> Thy seat, the Father's throne;
> O Lord! e'en now we sing Thy praise,
> Ours the eternal song to raise
> Worthy the Lord alone!"

As has already been remarked there is glory which belongs alone to Christ; there is glory which we share with Him, although in all things He has the pre-eminence. For God is using the present period of Christ's exaltation alone before the day of glory for the gathering of the church destined to share all the glory the Lord has won in the fields of redemption, and destined to manifest that glory in the time of creation's jubilee, "the acceptable year of the Lord."

In the verses read at the commencement the blessed Lord says, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." Do not our hearts burn within us, beloved, as we listen to such words? Do not we feel ourselves nearer the Lord in the practical and personal knowledge of His heart as we contemplate such grace? Impossible to tell what the winning of that glory has cost Him whose first thought, as He receives it, is to share it with us! But as we contemplate the night in which He was betrayed, its cries and tears, its agony and blood; as we

follow Him to the darkness of Calvary and hear Him say, "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?" "THOU hast brought me into the dust of death;" "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all *thy* waves and *thy* billows are gone over me;" "the waters are come in to my soul;" the heart learns worshippingly something of what the glory He has received has cost Him.

How precious to Him the glory He has so won—the glory He receives from Him whose honour, whose majesty, and whose gracious counsels were so dear to Him! But blessed be His name! the more He values it, the better pleased is He to share it with the church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself. Lord Jesus, *possess* these hearts by Thine own precious grace!

But what is the purpose with which He gives this glory as we find it expressed in these verses? "That they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Here, then, we have the place of the church of God in the millennial glory. For though this unity is effected by the Holy Ghost, who at Pentecost baptized these saints into the body of Christ—the church; yet it is its millennial manifestation which is here brought out.

In the previous verse, 21, the Lord speaks of the oneness in its present aspect, the purpose of which is "that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me." Evidently the Lord speaks here of a manifested unity, of a oneness of which the world can take account. The world did

see this unity at Pentecost, and for a little while afterwards. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul . . . . and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." (Acts iv. 31–33.) "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts v. 13, 14.) How bright and blessed the moment in which the Lord's prayer was answered in the manifested unity of the church of God! How sad the sequel when that amazing blessing, committed to the responsibility of man, was lost! The sense of grace grew feeble, the hope of Christ's return became dim, the world allured hearts that were slipping away from their heavenly calling, and the church in its responsibility upon earth became a wreck.

Does this alter God's blessed purpose as regards the church of His counsels? In no wise. He will manifest that church in glory in a perfect oneness which will make the world *know* that the Father sent the Son, and loves the saints as He loves the blessed Lord. Nor does it alter our responsibility. The world ought to see the saints of God one now. It should see the unity which tells that the power of the Holy Ghost so links souls to Christ, and so effaces every natural feeling and every selfish interest, that all have one common purpose, object and rallying point. No ruin of that which was committed to man can alter our responsibility to "endeavour

to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is one body.*" God has formed this one body by the Holy Ghost. We have not to form a unity; it *is* formed. It is ours to own what God has formed, and to walk in it. Christ is the centre, the word of God is the rule, the Holy Ghost is the power. Spite of all within and around, all three continue in undiminished power and freshness, and we possess them. May we walk by the Holy Ghost, according to the word, and with the Lord Jesus, "endeavouring to *keep* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The immediate result of the work of the cross, and the exaltation of Christ on high, is the formation of the church. The Person of the Lord Jesus is the rock upon which He said (Matt. xvi. 18) "I will build my church." The building of the church was still future whilst the Lord yet walked upon earth. He does not say, "upon this rock I have built my church," nor "I am building." But "upon this rock I *will* build my church." The rock was there, but the building was not yet begun.

The Lord's *death* was needed, as indeed we have already seen. He died that "he should gather together *in one*, the children of God that were scattered abroad." Till that death had taken place the *one*ness could not exist—the "one body" could not be formed.

Nor was this enough—though it was the righteous and sufficient foundation of all. The exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God was needed that thence He might build His church. His exaltation was needed, for until the "Head" was glorified in heaven, the "members" could not be united to Him. And it is for

a Christ, rejected here, whose claims are owned in heaven, that the bride is gathered out. For Moses, rejected with the insolent, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" God had prepared a bride in the country whither rejection by his own people had driven him. Still more striking is the case of Joseph whom his brethren hated, whom "the archers have sorely grieved and shot at, and hated," but whose "bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." His own may cast him out with bitter hatred, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" But God answers their rejection of him by exalting him and giving him, whilst still "separate from his brethren," a bride to share his glory. In due time he has "dominion" over the rebellious people who rejected him, to do them "good in their latter end." But the place of the bride abides ever that of her Lord.

The application of these typical histories is not difficult, now that the church is being called out and her place and portion have been revealed. The Lord Jesus is the "nobleman" who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." "But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." (Luke xix. 12–14.) Whilst the Lord is absent from the earth which has "refused" and "hated" Him, and before He returns, having received the kingdom, His "Asenath" shares the glory unseen by those who have rejected Him, and His "Zipporah" is the companion of His rejection.

The Old Testament has many other types of the place

of the church as thus united to Christ, although the calling of this body was still "hid in God." The wife of the first man is one of the most striking. That she might be formed, Adam was cast into a deep sleep. Raised out of his sleep he exclaims, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." A deeper sleep fell upon the Lord Jesus—it was the sleep of death. He "loved the church and gave *himself* for it." He *died* that "he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." "Raised from the dead by the glory of the father," He "nourishes and cherishes" the church. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Eph. v. 30.

One more manifestation of the manifold grace of God to call forth worship from our hearts, but at length the richest and the mightiest! He has, as it were, "kept the good wine until now." Amongst the heavenly saints, when all are gathered home, there will be those whom we call Old Testament saints, and there will be some gathered after the church has been presented to her Lord, and these doubtless in different capacities, as in an earthly house the family is composed of others besides the wife. But the highest place and the one nearest her Lord, the bride will fill. And the bride is formed of those who believe in Christ during His rejection. Ah, that body, the church, the bride of Christ is God's noblest work!

What a difference in the outflow of the boundless grace of God has been made by His perfect revelation in Christ, and the full glory Christ has brought to God! John Baptist, greatest of woman-born, has not the lofty place which is the portion of the least of God's saints

now. "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Worthy testimony that the *will of God* HAS BEEN *done*! His heart has found its perfect rest as regards man, in the Son of man, and now GRACE REIGNS.

When Christ was rejected, when the world would not have the Son of His love, when even "his own" "denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto (them); and killed the Prince of life;" God glorified Him at His right hand. And now He unites the church with Him there as His bride. A few days after man had consummated his guilt in crucifying the Lord of glory, God gathered out of the guilty city where He was murdered, thousands who were "added to the church," and who will form part of the bride presented to Christ, when "The marriage of the Lamb is come." What grace worthy of its God!

Henceforth, the church, formed of those who through grace believe on the Lord, whilst the world rejects Him, ranks with Christ as the wife ranks with her husband. If Adam is set in authority over all creation, Eve shares that authority. If the second Man, the last Adam, is placed in power over all the work of God's hand, His heavenly "Eve" shares His glory with Him. There is a better thing than sharing glory, we share His heart. But we shall be with Him in all His glory. Thank God, it will not rob us of His heart to share His glory! It is in possessing Himself that we enjoy the fair inheritance of all He has received.

"Then weep no more—'tis all thine own—
His crown, His joy divine,

And, sweeter far than all beside,
He, He Himself is thine."

Oh yes, His heart will be ours for ever, blessed be His name! The very heart that bowed beneath the judgment of God in our stead we shall share for ever and ever. Long, long after the glories of the millennium are lost in the brighter rays of the eternal day, when God shall be all in all, the heart of the Lord Jesus shall be our abiding, satisfying portion.

But not only were the death of Christ and His exaltation on high necessary for the calling out of the church, but this could not take place without the descent of the Holy Ghost, and till Pentecost He was not here personally as dwelling in this world. The Holy Ghost has always acted ever since creation and in creation. Every soul that was ever quickened was quickened by the Holy Ghost. Adam, no doubt, and Abel, and every believer since, all have been quickened by the Holy Ghost. But until the exalted Christ sent Him down, believers were not indwelt by the Holy Ghost. This explains the fact that David asked for the Holy Ghost, and that the disciples before Pentecost were bidden to ask for Him too. But Christians are never taught to ask for the Holy Ghost. That some of them do ask for Him, is but an evidence of the terrible declension of the church of God. The Holy Ghost has been given. For myself, I should as soon think of praying for the death of Christ as for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Do you say that I undervalue the blessed Spirit of God? But do I undervalue the gift of Christ or His death because I do not pray for the one or the other? Nay, but exclaim with joy, "Thanks be

unto God for his unspeakable gift!" Christ has already been given. He has died and is risen. The work of His death is an accomplished work. We enter into the fruits of it through grace and by faith. He tasted death for us. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." And if we do not ask Christ to die, nor God to give His Son, neither can we ask God to give us His Holy Spirit, for He has given Him. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God." To ask Him then to give us His good Spirit is to dishonour the Holy Ghost who is already present. It is to dishonour the work of Christ and His present glory above in consequence of which the Holy Ghost has been sent down. A very different thing is it to cry to God that we may be filled with the Spirit. We have need of this because of our terrible weakness and the tendency of present things to hinder and mar the work of the Spirit which *is* in us. We may and ought to pray that we may in no way grieve "the Holy Spirit of God whereby we *are* sealed unto the day of redemption." And great need have the children of God to cry earnestly to Him that they be kept from "quenching the Spirit"—one great, sad, crying sin of Christendom. But the Holy Spirit is as truly dwelling in the saints now, as Christ once dwelt at Nazareth or Capernaum.

Now that the Holy Ghost was not personally sent down until Pentecost is clear from many scriptures. In John vii. 38, 39, we read, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which

they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." This passage not only teaches us that the Holy Ghost had not yet been given when the Lord thus spoke, but that His mission could only take place consequent upon Christ being glorified. The same testimony is borne by the chapters of John, which record the Lord's parting discourses to His disciples—indeed it runs through them.

Take, for instance, chapter xiv. 16, "I will pray the Father, and he *shall give* you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and *shall be in you.*" Here we learn the important truth that the Holy Ghost, once given, is not to leave, as Christ was leaving. He was to abide, to dwell with them, to be in them. Until the moment when He leads the church to her Lord the Holy Ghost will abide with the saints, "and shall be *in*" them.

Again, chapter xvi. 7, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." If you will read diligently and prayerfully these chapters, you will find that the sending of the Holy Ghost *characterises* the period which was to succeed the Lord's departure; that is, the *church* period, the interval in God's ways with Israel, His great earthly centre, during which the church is being gathered for Christ, to be His body and His bride.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of a just apprehension of the place of the Holy Ghost in the

church of God, of His personal presence there, and of His indwelling the saints which compose it. The true character of the Christian's calling is formed by it, and the church of God could have no existence without it. We have just seen that the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell here below could not take place till Christ was glorified. Everything for the glory of God and the blessing of man depended upon the death of Christ. God set His stamp of perfect satisfaction upon that death in raising Christ from the dead. Nay more, He glorified Christ in Himself above. Listen to the Spirit of God's testimony of the result—the testimony He rendered the day He came down to seal the saints of God and baptize them into the body of Christ. "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Acts ii. 33.

What joy to our hearts is this divine witness to the present glory of Christ! Not a ray of that glory which is not gladness to our hearts! Well He has won it! and won it in the work in which all the deep love of His heart is fully expressed. "Who loved me and gave himself for me."

> "Thy cross, thy cross, 'tis there we see,
> What Thou, beloved Saviour, art;
> There all the love that dwells in thee
> Was labouring in Thy breaking heart."

Priceless work! and priceless love! "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned." Oh the deep well-

spring of love in the heart of our God! Oh, "the love of Christ that passeth knowledge!" And now His feet have trodden "the path of life," and He has entered the heavenly courts "with his own blood." All heaven has bowed before the One whom but a few days before man blindfolded, and buffeted, and scourged. The brow that still bears the marks of the "cruel mocking" of a crown of thorns,—

> "Heaven's royal diadem adorns
> The mighty Victor's brow."

And that peerless glory—what will be its effect for the world guilty of shedding His blood? What of the hands red with His blood in the heartless and rebellious scene that has cast Him out? "Father, forgive them," had sounded from the cross. "Remission of sins .... beginning at Jerusalem" had been pronounced by His risen lips. At length, with all heaven prostrate at His feet, "He shed forth" the Holy Ghost, by whom on the first day of His mission, and in the guilty city where grace was to "begin," three thousand were formed into the body destined to the highest glory to which God can ever call any of His creatures.

Not long afterwards the great ones in Israel were assembled to draw up the message, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Not even the heavenly rays that beamed from Stephen whose face shone like that of Moses, and with the same divine light, could alter the malicious determination. "A young man whose name was Saul" presided, and agreed to the message which Stephen was to bear to "the Son of man standing

at the right hand of God." The Lord Jesus received the spirit of His "martyr Stephen," but not until broken by the clatter of stones and the gnashing of teeth, a sound like the still small voice of grace had risen to heaven, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

It was in that "young man whose name was Saul" that the Lord was to "shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." As he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the Lord he was "apprehended" by Him, but apprehended in grace, for the "calling on high." The blessed Lord, from whose face shines a light "above the brightness of the sun," tells the blessed tale of the oneness of the church with Him, the Head in heaven in the very challenge which changes all for Saul. Henceforth the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" leads the persecutor

"Captive in the chains of love."

He is a "chosen vessel" for the revelation of the wondrous mystery—"Christ and the church."

These, my brethren, are ways of deepest grace, and if we had no personal share in them, it would surely become us to bow the head and worship. But, thank God, we through His grace form part of that body. Gentile "dogs," "far off," "without Christ," "having no hope and without God in the world" we have been "made nigh by the blood of Christ." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." We are one with Christ by the Holy Ghost. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . . For

of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

I have just said, "we are one with Christ by the Holy Ghost." And this is a truth of immense importance. It is not by faith, but by the Holy Ghost, that we become members of the body of Christ. We cannot be members of His body without faith. For, says the word, "after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus brings the soul into peace with God. It is the believing soul that the Spirit of God seals. But we are not only sealed *by* the Holy Ghost, we are "sealed *with* that Holy Spirit of promise." He *is* the seal which God puts upon us in Christ; we are *His* for eternity, for none can change the sealing of God in Christ, the sealing *with* the Holy Ghost.

And this blessed Spirit of God unites us so perfectly to Christ that He calls us Himself. (See Acts ix. 4; 1 Cor. xii. 12.) "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." This is the mystery revealed to Paul, and by him made known in the Epistles, especially in that to the Ephesians. "Mystery" has not in scripture the meaning we often associate with this word. It merely means "secret," something which remains a secret till God is pleased to reveal it. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those which are revealed belong unto us." (Deut. xxix. 29.) God had secret things: He has now revealed them. In Ephesians iii. 3, we read, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the

mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

God's great secret, then, is revealed. And how does the Spirit of God characterize this blessed secret? "The mystery of Christ." In 1 Corinthians xii. 12, 13, it is said, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." Here the whole body, head and members, is called "Christ." This is the amazing mystery of a God "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

That redeemed sinners, saved by grace, whether Jew or Gentile, should be united to a glorified Christ in heaven, as members are united to the head, was not possible until the "due time" in which God has accomplished and revealed it. For (1) man had not been tested in every way until the Son of God came in grace and was rejected. But when His "miracles and signs and wonders" so full of mercy and goodness for man

were attributed to Satan; when priest and people so far "forsook their own mercy" as to clamour for His blood, man was *proved* to be "only evil continually." The cross was morally the final judgment of the world as such. When Satan led the world up to the cross to crucify the Lord of glory, he led it up to its own unsparing judgment, to its utter ruin. "Now is the judgment of this world." But if good according to God is not to be found in man, his entire setting-aside leaves room for *pure grace* to do its own work of sovereign goodness. Man, tested to the uttermost, is utterly bad. God, fully made known in Christ, is supremely good. He shews it in "his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

(2.) Whilst man was being put to the test to see if his wound were incurable—or rather whilst God was in the wisdom of His ways shewing what He knew infinitely, that it is incurable—God recognized a distinction between the people He had brought outwardly near to Himself, and the Gentiles. This was a necessary part of the test to which man was put. It was in privileged Israel "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises"—it was in Israel that God put man according to the flesh to the last test, which ended in the crucifixion of the Elect of God in whom His soul is well pleased. More guilty than the Gentiles, why should their place be maintained? God breaks down "the middle wall of partition" in the very work in which Israel's guilt reaches its highest point. God has done with Israel on the ground of their responsibility; He will take them up again in grace.

Meanwhile, the "middle wall" is gone. "There is no difference."

This was essential to the formation of the church of God where there is "neither Jew nor Greek." Impossible that the church in which the Gentiles are "fellow-heirs and of the same body" could exist whilst Israel's place in the earth was maintained. The separation of Israel from the Gentiles was imperative before the cross, so much so that when the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity, those who had married Gentile wives had to put them away. And it was God who required it. It was not a piece of superstition, but God's own commandment. It was well-pleasing to the Lord that it should be done. They had sinned against Him in contracting such marriages. These were not owned of God in heaven, and they were not to be owned in Immanuel's land. But now in the present time, when Peter objected to go in to the Gentiles, he was taught by the Spirit of God not to call any man common or unclean. There was no difference existing in Peter's day—none whilst God is gathering out the church. Till a soul is brought to God, be he Jew or Gentile, he is a lost sinner, "there is no difference." When he is saved he becomes a member of the church of God and ceases to be Jew or Gentile, for, indeed, "there is no difference."

This condition did not and *could* not exist before Pentecost; it will not exist after the church is gone, for in the millennial day Israel—despised, trodden-down Israel will be again at the head of the nations. A thousand prophecies in the Old Testament will have their fulfilment in the fact that Israel is blest beneath their Messiah in

their own land, and that the Gentiles are blest, in a place subordinate to Israel. This we saw in considerable detail last week. The moral reason of it was also in measure before us. God will be glorified in the people that dishonoured Him. Their place was "the gift and calling of God" and "without repentance." The blessing they could never attain on the ground of works God will bring in on the ground of grace. The church, however, must first be gathered home to the Father's kingdom, for in her calling "there is no difference."

(3.) Until the cross the foundation of the church was not laid. We saw a few moments ago how essential for the formation of the church were the sufferings of Christ, and His being glorified above. I need not now dwell upon this again. Moreover, all our hearts say Amen, to this blessed truth. How right that when God has been perfectly glorified, His grace should sweep away every barrier! How well that it should assert its right to be as sovereign and as good as its eternal source! And so it has done. The veil that hid God has been rent and we have boldness to enter the holiest. The Spirit of God cries, Abba Father, in our hearts. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." The revelation of the mystery completes in a sense the circle of divine truth. (See Col. i. 25, 26.) The apostles and prophets to whom this revelation was given are called the foundation, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." It is as rejected that He is made the head of the corner. It is consequent upon His exaltation on high that the mystery is "revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Need I remark that the "prophets" here spoken of are those of the New Testament? Not only is the order "apostles and prophets" sufficient to shew it, but the whole passage *contrasts* the present revelation of the mystery with the past days, those of Old Testament prophets, in which it was "hid in God."

But (4) till the Head was glorified in heaven the members could not be joined to Him. There could be no union with Christ until our old man was crucified with Christ and the new man was brought in, in a risen Jesus. It is to a risen Christ we are united; it is to a *heavenly* one! "I ascend unto my father and your father, to my God and your God," must come before, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Impossible to insist upon this too often or too strenuously! With the Son of God before He came down in grace, how could guilty and polluted man ever have been united? With Christ upon earth, we could *as little* have become one. As infinitely holy as before His self-humiliation, and we as polluted—oh the impassable gulf that separated us! To have been united to Him in death (save as God judged our old man there), would have been equally impossible. He was there *for* the sinner. Had the sinner been there, the fire of divine judgment would have consumed him—the floods of wrath would have swept him away! But the work of the cross accomplished, sin put away, the blessed Victim glorified in heaven, a new creation introduced—ah, now the Holy Ghost can baptize believers into the body of Christ!

For (5) it is the Holy Ghost that makes us one with

Christ, and He could not be sent till Christ was glorified. But, now, what floods of blessing! At Jerusalem, in Samaria, at Damascus, at Cæsarea, the Spirit of God finds Jews and Gentiles alike "children of wrath." He cleanses and saves them, and unites them to Christ in heaven. Read the list of evil-doers in 1 Corinthians vi. 10. There the blessed Spirit of God seeks souls that He may present them "a chaste virgin to Christ." "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He makes them one with Christ in heaven. Precious grace of God! What trophies has it won in a world of sin! And what an answer to the cross!

Let us now look at the place this favoured body, the church, has in the "times of the restitution of all things." We have seen more than once that "when Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) This manifestation is spoken of in Romans viii. as "the manifestation of the sons of God." It is there seen to be the signal for the deliverance of creation "from the bondage of corruption," that it may enter into the liberty which the glory of the children of God brings in. Depths of mercy! "Exceeding riches of grace!" And what a display of these riches when Christ "shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe!" We have dwelt upon this—our hearts have burned within us as we have gazed upon the picture of our future which the Spirit of God has drawn! Blessed day, when every lineament shall speak the praise of

Christ! When His image will be so imprinted upon us that it will be HE who is seen, and HE who is admired, when the universe of God gazes upon the church.

Last week we dwelt upon Ephesians i. 10, where we find the millennium called "the dispensation (or administration) of the fulness of times," that is, the period in which the perfect end of God's governmental ways is seen in the dominion of Christ. "That, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth—even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ." All things are to be gathered up under the headship of Christ. Heavenly glories and earthly glories have already passed before us; all will be displayed under the headship of Christ. There is not a glory in heaven of which He is not the head. There is not a glory in the "habitable world to come whereof we speak" (see Heb. ii.), not a glory upon the millennial earth that will not exist by, and because of, the headship of Christ. He is the head of all glory.

"In whom," continues the apostle, "we have obtained an inheritance." In this vast scene of glory we are associated with Christ. In regard to the glory that He has received—heavenly and earthly glory—we have obtained an inheritance in Him. The inheritance of God, as it is said a little lower down, He will possess in the saints. All that vast inheritance that shall be under

the hand of the Son of man, God will hold in the saints; as Canaan was Jehovah's inheritance, and He gave it to, and held it in, Israel.

And what is God's purpose in all this, beloved brethren? "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." In the early part of the chapter we find ourselves, "to the praise of the glory of his grace"—the grace that gave us, "out of his fulness," the very place of Christ in the presence of God. He has set us "holy and without blame before him in love." He has given us "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself." He has satisfied His heart and accomplished the good pleasure of His will, in giving us the highest place of blessing known to His own heavenly abode, that a creature could occupy.

But here we are to be "to the praise of his glory." When the day of glory comes, our being with Christ and sharing His glory, will be to the eternal praise of God, in His highest glory. "Who first trusted in Christ." The force of this expression is, "who trusted beforehand in Christ." That is, whilst Christ is unseen —before the day of glory comes, we have trusted in this Christ in whom all things are to be gathered under one headship. Thomas, in John xx., is a type of those who will believe in Christ when they see Him. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." He thought himself very wise to believe only upon the evidence of his senses. Poor Thomas! He was a child of faith, but what he then said was not the fruit of what he had learned of God.

When the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to Thomas on the next Lord's day, he says, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing." The voice of the Good Shepherd has called His sheep by name, and the heart of His feeble one is touched by the grace of Christ. He does not need to put his finger into the print of the nails. "My Lord and my God!" he exclaims.

Now the Lord Jesus addresses to him a word which has unspeakable sweetness for us. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Israel will *see* and believe. We, through grace, have believed—ah, no thanks to us!—we have believed whilst Christ is unseen. "They shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." We were forced to come to Christ, because we were so guilty and miserable that we could not do without Him, but it was the grace and teaching of God that brought us to Him.

Thanks, eternal thanksgiving to his grace! We have believed in Christ without seeing in His hand the print of the nails. We have believed in an unseen Christ, and we are looked upon of God as sharing His rejection in this world. When the day of glory comes, how "blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!" We are blessed already, but the blessedness will be manifested then, in that we shall be to the praise of God's glory.

A little lower down (verse 18), you will read, "The

eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." Now, the calling of God has a hope which is connected with, and springs from, it. This hope was before us the first evening we were together. It is the present expectation of Christ. The *hope* of His calling is not the calling itself. The calling is our place in Christ, as unfolded in this chapter of surpassing grace. And as we are here looked upon as already sitting in heavenly places in Christ, "the hope of his calling" is not developed in this portion. But there is a hope which links itself naturally with the calling. If this is heavenly, our hope is heavenly too. If our calling is summed up in the word "Christ," so is our hope. He is coming for us personally to receive us to Himself, "that where *I* am there ye may be also."

But, besides the hope of His calling, there is "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." There is an inheritance yet to be manifested; and the Spirit of God—the seal of the love wherewith we are loved, the seal that marks us as God's before the day of glory, is the earnest of the inheritance—the assurance to our souls that the glory of that inheritance shall one day be ours. God will hold it in the saints: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath

put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Here is the church's place! The same power that raised Christ out of the tomb, whither He had gone down in grace, has found us, as the next chapter tells, "dead in trespasses and sins," and "hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This "mighty power" has put everything under Christ, and given Him, head over all things, to the church. The One who, in purpose and title, has been set, and who will soon be set, in fact, in supreme and beneficent authority over God's creation, heavenly and earthly, *is given to the church!* We possess HIM now, and shall do when all principalities and powers, above and below, shall be seen beneath His sway! He will not sit in solitary glory on that peerless throne of transcendent brightness, the church will share it with Him. But oh, how near His heart will she be! and what a tale of *grace* that *glory* will tell!

> "There near Thy heart upon the throne,
> Thy ransomed bride shall see,
> What grace was in the bleeding Lamb,
> Who died to make her free!"

"The sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow!" Glories, assuredly, not too great to be an adequate answer to those sufferings! But we are here in their full display. And their display as the accomplishment of our Lord's word, "And the glory which thou

gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." What a truth for our hearts is this!—"I in them, and thou in me." When the saints are seen in the glory of Christ, bright with His image, perfectly conformed to Him, they will irradiate the very glory of Christ upon a redeemed creation. That bright redemption-glory will shine from them upon the peaceful scene blessed beneath His sway;—"I in them."

And in that glory there will be this blessed testimony to the Person of Christ, and to the grace that brought Him so low, "And thou in me!" The Lord Jesus Christ will reign as Son of man; but, although He has taken that place of subjection, yet the Father is in Him. Oh, the fulness that dwells in Christ!

But what a sight for principalities and powers above, and for the renewed earth beneath! The one who, humbled in lowly grace in this world, revealed the Father in all the fulness of His being, shall reign as Son of man for the praise, and as the servant, of God. But the Father will be seen in Him, whilst He shines through the saints. They, in turn, will shed the light of His glory in that thrice blessed day.

In Revelation xxi. we have a glimpse of the church in this glory. It is there presented under the figure of a city, "the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God." The new Jerusalem is not heaven, but the glorified church, as almost every verse shews. It descends "out of heaven from God," and we

contemplate it in its relations with the millennial earth.

At this late hour it is impossible to do more than consider briefly the general truth conveyed, and one or two most interesting details. The whole description and the teaching conveyed in it, will well repay your earnest and prayerful study of them.

The prophet had been called by "one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials," to see the false woman, "mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." (See chap. xvii.) This corrupt system bears, indeed, the name of Christ, but only to dishonour it by her moral and spiritual uncleanness, by her "abominable idolatries," and by the blood of the saints found in her. She claims to be the church of God, the bride of Christ, whilst she is not only herself false and unclean, but is even "the *mother* of harlots and abominations (idols)." God's own brand of eternal infamy rests upon the brazen brow of that wickedest system upon which He has ever looked down; where the highest pretensions of being the "true," the "Catholic" church, the chaste bride of Christ, are associated with the lowest depths of corruption, and almost Satanic cruelty!

Strongly, directly in contrast with this painful vision, "there came unto me," says the prophet, "one of the seven angels which had the seven vials . . . . saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." In an earlier chapter the Spirit of God records the marriage of the Lamb, and in the beginning of this chapter shews us the glorified church, after the millennium,

in the eternal state. It is said of her, "I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared, as a bride adorned for her husband." The *history* then is complete. But the Spirit of God would give a *description* of the holy city—the bride, just as (chap. xvii.) He gave a description of Babylon—the harlot, after her history was complete.

And now, beloved brethren, it is our unspeakable joy to contemplate the church in its relation to the government of God when that government is seen in its perfection in the administration of the fulness of times. It is the bride, but not presented in the communion of her Lord's affections, but in a governmental way in the time of His glory and hers. You have very fresh in your minds, I doubt not, what our blessed Lord says as we read it in beginning this evening; "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me." When the church is actually seen in glory, the world will *know*. We shall see in a moment what it will know; but the purpose of that union in glory will not be that the world may *believe*, but that it may know certainly that which it is God's eternal purpose to manifest by it.

The world will see the church in the glory of which we read in the portion now before us; for as already remarked, it is here in its relations with the earth in its time of blessing. This holy city is seen "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." That which in chapter iv. sets forth the glory of God as

seen upon the throne, here serves to express the glory John saw when he gazed upon the New Jerusalem—the church.

How amazing is this! Need I say it is the communicable glory of God that is seen? It could not be the *essential* glory of God; for this can neither be imparted nor beheld. But it is neither human nor angelic glory, it is divine. The glory which God is pleased to display was seen on the throne; now it forms the brightness in which the church appears. When John looks at the New Jerusalem, he sees that which set forth what could be seen of Him that sitteth upon the throne. God has so wrought in grace that those whom He has found in the pollution of this world, He has cleansed and "made nigh by the blood of Christ." They are "redeemed to God" by his blood. So truly has He brought them to Himself, that, in their completeness and glory, they form the holy city from which the glory of God shines upon the millennial earth.

But what blessed nearness to God all this implies! Even now at peace with Him, enjoying His "favour which is better than life," we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." What fruition of this hope that makes not ashamed, have we here!

> "But who that glorious blaze
> Of living light shall tell?
> Where all His brightness God displays,
> And the Lamb's glories dwell."

The details of this marvellous description are most interesting and most instructive. We must but very

briefly notice a few. The "wall great and high" gives the idea of perfect security. It is only a figure, but a precious one. There will be no danger from without—it will assuredly be peace within. The wall is of jasper; our eternal protection, our unfailing security, is "the glory of God."

> "Safety, where no foe approaches,
> Rest, where toil shall be no more,
> Joy, whereon no grief encroaches,
> Peace, where strife shall all be o'er."

The twelve gates which bear "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel," set forth by their number, perfection of an outward and governmental kind. The force of "gate" as a figure in scripture is well illustrated by Ruth iv.; and that the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem should bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, shews at once the immutability of God's purpose with regard to the beloved "people," and the governmental relations of the heavenly city with the earth during the period when that people shall be the centre of blessing. Angels as ministering spirits attend at the gates, as of old they ascended and descended the ladder at the foot of which lay the father of these tribes.

The foundations, still twelve in number as before, bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. A little while ago we read "and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." It was to them that the calling of the bride and body of Christ was revealed. They thus form the foundation as it is seen in Ephesians.

We have a different aspect of the church here, but in the perfect, twelve-fold foundation the apostles have still their place.

"And the street of the city was pure gold like unto transparent glass." Pure gold is a figure all through scripture of divine righteousness. "Like unto transparent glass" sets forth purity, but purity in a fixed condition. The laver at which the priests washed is no longer needed. Nor is "the washing of water by the word." The washing is all finished, as the soft light of grace has passed into the brightness of the glory of God. The unsullied purity it has produced abides for ever.

Blessed city, whose very structure tells of absolute righteousness which would resist the fire if it could be applied, now that all is perfect and abiding, and tells too of absolute holiness unchanging in its perfection!

> "Where no shade nor stain can enter,
> Nor the gold be dim;
> In that holiness unsullied
> I shall walk with Him."

"And I saw no temple therein"—a contrast to the earthly Jerusalem. There will be a temple there. The description of it in Ezekiel is so complete in its details that I suppose one might build a temple like it. But in the heavenly Jerusalem there is none. And why not? If there were a temple, the worshipper must go up to it and come down from it. But no! "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." They *pervade* it. It is itself all temple, so to speak. Worship

fills it, as the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb do! Worship characterises the whole.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light (light bearer) of it." Happy, happy city which the glory of God covers without, of which it forms the walls, and which it lights up within! Oh, "glorious blaze of living light!" "The glory of God did lighten it." And whence does the lustre of that heavenly light proceed? From the Lamb! Thank God for such a truth! No light in the New Jerusalem that is not the glory of God, and none which does not proceed from the Lamb. The full glory of God shines already in Christ, and in the heavenly city it will beam forth in all its unhindered brightness from the Lamb.

"With a light like a stone most precious
The city of God shall shine;
His light in its cloudless glory,
His eternal light is mine.

Undimmed in that wondrous vessel,
The glory of God's great love
Shall beam o'er the earth He ransomed,
And shall fill the heavens above.

A golden lamp in the heavens,
That all may see and adore
The Lamb who was slain, and who liveth,
Who liveth for evermore.

So I go on my way rejoicing,
That the heavens and earth shall see
His grace and His glory and beauty,
In the depth of His love for me."

And this, my brethren, is our place when all is gathered under the headship of Christ. In that wondrous day of earth's blessing beneath His sway, the world will see the saints of God in all this glory. "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." What grace it is that our glory is to be the witness that the Father sent the Son! But how could it then be doubted? That mission has borne such fruits of grace and of glory that at length the world *knows* that Christ was sent of the Father.

"And hast loved them as thou hast loved me." When the world sees us in the *same* glory as Christ, manifested as sons of God, bearing the image of the First-born, it will *know* that the Father loves us with the same love He bears the Lord Jesus. And who shall tell the depths of that love? Not only when Jehovah possessed Him "in the beginning of his way, before his works of old," was He "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," but, as born into this world, as One who "made himself of no reputation," how was He the object of all the delight of the Father! It is then, and thus, that God calls Him "mine elect, in whom my soul delighted." Trace, my brethren, His path of grace down here—how passing sweet the occupation! What an odour of a sweet smell rises to God! And what love beams from the Father's countenance on the Son of His love treading the path of lonely sorrow, but of perfect obedience!

"As a tender suckling rises,
From a dry and stony land;
Object of man's proud despising,
Grew the Plant of God's right hand.

Grace and truth in love unceasing,
Rivers in the thirsty ground;
Every step to God well pleasing,
Spread their heavenly savour round."

And the response in heaven?—the answer of the Father's heart? Alike, in the depths of lowly association with those who, moved by grace, confess their sins, and on the holy mount where that perfect Man is wrapt in the cloud of "the excellent glory," the voice of the Father proclaims Him "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And does that holy path lead down to death? Yes, but only to call forth a new character of love. Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ! "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again."

Whatever the love that flows forth from the heart of God, to that blessed Son of His love, whose meat it was to do His will, and who perfectly glorified Him at all costs, down to, and in, the dust of death, with that same love are we loved. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." This is our present portion, morning, noon, and night, when circumstances around are easy, and when they are difficult; when the path is smooth, and when it is rugged. Oh, what favour! what grace! But the world will see that it

is so, will *know* it in the day that is coming. The church of God in glory, one with Christ, displaying Him, and expressing the perfect love of the Father for the Son of His love! "That, in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." May our hearts bow in worship at the prospect! May they be formed by it to walk down here to the praise of that Saviour and Lord!

"E'en now let my ways, Lord,
Be bright with Thy praise, Lord!
For brief are the days, ere Thy coming again.
I am waiting for Thee, Lord!
Thy beauty to see, Lord!
No triumph for me like Thy coming again!"

Most certainly do I believe, as before remarked, that what the Lord prizes most of all in this world, is a heart that waits for Him. In Luke xii. we have the reward of service: it is power, "he will make him ruler over all that he hath!' We have also the reward of waiting, shall I call it?—rather the response of Christ to the heart that waits for Him; it is that unutterable repose of love which He thus expresses, "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." May we be found waiting for Christ! May we be found so waiting that nothing will satisfy our longing but His returning Person! Oh, for hearts to be ever saying, "Come, Lord Jesus!" He looks for it: may He see it! And, depend upon it, in the measure in which we are in present communion with Christ, in

that measure shall we be waiting for Him, and in still the same measure will our ways be such as the Master can approve. Thus shall we be separated from this present evil world, and walking in the power, in the deep *reality* of those things which are not seen as yet.

But is there a soul here that will not be in that glory? Oh, is it possible! God lay it upon each conscience now to ask as in His presence, "Have I a title in the blood of Christ to that glory? Or, when that glory shines out, will my portion be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone?" Terrible alternative. I pray my God to present it in power to the soul that is not in Christ, but with all the attractions of grace to win your hearts for Himself. Each one now present will either be a living stone in the heavenly Jerusalem, or have his part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Oh, make no mistake about this, beloved friends, I entreat you! God's word is as clear as the light of heaven, and as unalterable as His throne. Man, estranged from God and *loving*, alas! the distance at which he is from Him, may make theories about his future, and he may alter them as he constantly does; but God's eternal truth abides unchanged and unchanging. There is life in Christ now for every believing soul. Precious grace that has brought life—eternal life down into a world of death! Listen! God says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) Yes, there is life in Christ, and faith receives out of His fulness grace for grace. How simple—how divine the

glad tidings of grace! Bow to them, I pray you. Receive them by faith.

Those who do believe God's good news *have* eternal life already. When Christ comes the power of endless life in Him will be extended to the body. Are they "alive and remain?" they never die. Is the body called to pass through death? "though he were dead yet shall he live." He has part in the first resurrection. And what, my friends, is the portion of those who have no part in Him, who is the resurrection and the life? Scripture answers—it is the living God who says, "the second death." And what is the second death? The lake of fire. The second death is not ceasing to be: God says that *the second death is the lake of fire.* May He in His mercy lay this solemnly upon your conscience! I implore you, who are not ready for the coming of Christ to flee to Him. He is waiting to receive the sinner. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, come to Him now, that you may receive the present cleansing of your sins in His blood, the present favour of God—the present love of the Father as it rests upon Christ, and all the glory of Christ when that glory is manifested. My soul lingers over you. I recall the tears of Him who wept over a privileged but rebellious city He loved. I tremble lest it should become true of some of you who hear the gospel now, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least IN THIS THY DAY, the things that make for thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." God forbid this should ever be true of you! Remember that *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. I close with an earnest entreaty from the

depths of my heart, "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!" May I meet you at the marriage supper of the Lamb! May we together irradiate and reflect the glory of Christ upon a delivered creation, blessed beneath His sway!

"UNTO HIM BE GLORY
IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS,
THROUGHOUT ALL AGES,
WORLD WITHOUT END.
AMEN."

Thus said Jesus unto his disciples. Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

St Matthew 19 Chap 23 Verse

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